COMICS
THE GOLDEN AGE

THE HISTORY OF DC COMICS
50 YEARS OF FANTASTIC IMAGINATION

DEDICATED TO THE MARVELOUS IMAGINATIONS OF THE CREATORS WHO BROUGHT THE DC UNIVERSE TO LIFE

EDITED BY RON GOULART

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AN ANNIVERSARY TRIBUTE
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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION..... 8
D.C. TITLES..... 9
THE ALL AMERICAN BRANCH... 27
THE FUNNY STUFF..... 37
Sheldon Mayer & Scribbly..... 41
THE CREATORS..... 47
Golden Age Memories..... 48
Simon & Kirby..... 52
Jack Schiff..... 56
A FORGOTTEN HERO..... 61
GOLDEN AGE PORTFOLIO..... 65
Blue Bolt..... 67
Three Comrades..... 77
The Music Master..... 85
The Face..... 95

INTRODUCTION

This year DC is celebrating fifty years in the comic book business. Inspired by that fact, we've put together an entire issue devoted to the Golden Age output of Detective Comics, Inc.

Leading off is a history of the DC line from 1935 through the late 1940s—detailing the titles and characters that came forth and quoting the artists, writers and editors involved. Mike Barson returns, teamed with Peter Myer, to chronicle the DC phase of the career of that formidable team of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. Will Murray joins our ranks with an interview of longtime DC editor Jack Schiff.

Featured in our Funnymen section is none other than Sheldon Mayer. Our honored Second Banana is that pioneering caped crusader the Crimson Avenger. The Golden Age Memories department—a new one with this issue—offers some firsthand accounts of DC in the 1930s and 1940s. Using an oral history approach, we offer the remembrances of several artists, including Bernard Bailey (*The Spectre, Hourman, Tex Thomson*) and Hal Sherman (*The Star-Spangled Kid*).

You'll have noticed that we've grown fatter, adding more pages of both copy and art. In order to make these improvements, we've had to raise the price.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Next issue it's equal time, or nearly so, for the original Captain Marvel. We'll profile the Big Red Cheese and also take a look at the other heroes and heroines in the Fawcett Comics stable. Will Murray will be back with his promised look at Walter Gibson and the comic book career of The Shadow. Sam Moskowitz, a leading science fiction historian, will have an article on his longtime friend John Giunta. Long forgotten, Giunta did some excellent work in the 1940s and was the man who gave Frank Frazetta his start.

D.C. TITLES

JACK WOODS
THE WIDOW HARKINS AND THE REST OF JACK'S FRIENDS ARE BARRICADED IN THE GOLD MINE -- STANTON AND HIS MEN ARE SURROUNDING THE ENTRANCE TRYING TO BREAK IN AND TAKE POSSESSION -- JACK, POSING AS A DESPERADO, WITH ONE OF STANTON'S MEN, IS APPROACHING THE MINE THRU A SECRET TUNNEL -- THE ENTRANCE TO THE TUNNEL HAS JUST CAVED IN, BLOCKING THEIR RETREAT- BEFORE THEM YAWNS A WIDE CHASM - - -
by Will George
FAGIN, THERE'S NO RETREAT- WE'LL HAVE TO SCALE THE WALL TO THE CHASM TO GET TO THE OTHER SIDE -
DO YOU THINK WE CAN MAKE IT?
I'LL GO FIRST, BUT WE'LL HAVE TO WATCH OUR STEP -
GO AHEAD - I'M WITH YOU
JACK MAKES THE OTHER SIDE AFTER A DANGEROUS CLIMB - HE TURNS TO ASSIST FAGIN, WHEN HE HEARS A BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM -
HELP!!!
FAGIN LOSES HIS GRIP, AS PART OF THE WALL GIVES WAY, AND PLUNGES INTO THE BOTTOMLESS PIT TO A HORRIBLE DEATH - - -

ARE YOU GOING TO TRY AND STOP ME, SHERIFF?
WHO, ME? OH, NO! I'M GOIN' TO HELP YOU!
WHY, THAT YELLOW-LIVERED COYOTE!
WE GOT A COWARD FOR A SHERIFF!
MAKE WAY, FOLKS! I'M CLEARIN' OUT!
STRING HIM UP!
CONSARNED QUITTER!

The man who founded what was to become the highly successful DC organization, purveyors of magazines packed with excitement and adventure, had led an adventurous life himself. Born in Tennessee, Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson entered the U.S.Army as a commissioned second lieutenant in 1911. Dapper even then, he insisted on wearing London-made riding boots and Bond Street-tailored uniforms. He served in the Second Cavalry on the Mexican border and fought against Pancho Villa, in the Philippines, in Siberia and as commander of the American Cavalry Squadron in the Rhineland during World War I. Leaving the service in the 1920s, he became a writer for such top pulp magazines as *Adventure*. Sometime in the fall of 1934 the Major got a notion. He would start an original material comic book. At the time, with only *Famous Funnies* on the stands, he had no competition.

The first issue of *New Fun* bore the cover date of February, 1935. Touted as the Big Comic Magazine and "the New Magazine You've Been Waiting For," it was a tabloid and twice the size of *Famous*. While the magazine was bigger than the competition, it was nowhere near as colorful. The cover, which consisted of a cowboy page titled *Jack Woods* by Lyman Anderson, was in full color and bordered in bright red. The thirty two interior pages, though, were black and white. All the new strips were laid out like Sunday funnies and none, with a single exception, got more than one page.

The package was an eclectic one, offering several pages of printed matter along with the humor and adventure strips. In addition to comics you got a two page Western yarn, a sports page, radio news, movie news, instructions for building a model airplane and a popular science page. Among the to-be-continued adventure features were *Sandra of the Secret Service*, *Jack Andrews*, *All-American Boy*, *Cap'n Erik* and *Buckskin Jim*. Gag cartoonist Lawrence Lariar contributed *Barry O'Neill*, an adventure page pitting pipesmoking Barry against the insidious Oriental villain Fang Gow. Henry Kiefer, a European-trained artist who became one of the most successful comic book hacks, drew *Wing Brady*, about a Foreign Legionaire who was also an aviator. Adolphe Barreux, who also drew the modestly risque filler strips to be found in pulps such as *Spicy Adventure*, produced *The Magic Crystal of History*, a sort of

Ivanhoe
From the novel by Sir Walter Scott
The Grand Master grants Rebecca's request for trial by combat and appoints De Bois-Guilbert to meet her champion.
De Bois-Guilbert, who had intended to act as Rebecca's champion, accepts the gage with ill grace
The Grand Master tells Rebecca that her champion must meet De Bois-Guilbert in the lists in three days time
Rebecca appeals for a messenger to carry a letter to Isaac of York telling him of her predicament
All are afraid to risk the Grand Master's displeasure by offering to aid Rebecca
Finally the little cripple who ventures to Rebecca's kindness in curing him, offers to carry the letter

DR. OCCULT
THE GHOST DETECTIVE
LEGER and REUTHS
ONCE AGAIN DR OCCULT VISITS CHARON CEMETERY... BUT THIS TIME WITH HIS COMPANIONS, WHILE SORROWING FRIENDS SADLY WATCH THE BURIAL RITES
I—I LOVED HIM!
PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER, BOSS. I'M SORRY, BUT I HAVE TO GIVE YOU TO GIVE LIKE THIS
AND SHORTLY LATER, THE MOON BEAMS DOWN TO ILLUMINATE A WEIRD SIGHT: FIVE FIGS THE CREST OF A HILL, A LIKE DIFFERENT FIGURES WEAPONS THE MORTAL REMAINS OF DR. OCCULT

educational time travel fantasy. Clemens Gretter took care of the science fiction department, drawing both *Don Drake on the Planet Saro* and *2033/Super Police*.

Major Nicholson didn't neglect the classics and the first issue contained the initial installment of an adaptation of *Ivanhoe*. Charles Flanders, in his late twenties and already working in the King Features bullpen, did a handsome job of drawing the page. This was before he'd been induced to adopt the poor man's Alex Raymond style he was to use on such newspaper strips as *Secret Agent X-9* and *The Lone Ranger*. Flanders abandoned the Sir Walter Scott epic after a few issues and was next found doing *Treasure Island*. He also was the first artist to render the aforementioned *Sandra of the Secret Service*.

The humor pages to be found in the early issues were not exactly hilarious stuff. There was a funny animal strip called *Pelion and Ossa*, *Caveman Capers* and a college humor thing called *Jigger and Ginger*. Jack Warren, who had an attractive style but a not very inventive comic mind, was on hand with a cowboy page starring Loco Luke. Tom McNamara, a veteran newspaper cartoonist, was there with a kid page.

Because of the somewhat shaky state of the Major's finances, he often didn't get around to paying his artists the modest fees—usually $5 per page—he'd promised. Besides illwill this caused a lot of staff changes. Lyman Anderson quit after two issues and was replaced by W.C.Brigham; Lariar left and Leo O'Mealia eventually inherited Barry O'Neill; Barreaux gave way to someone named Monroe Eisenberg. New artists and writers also came into the fold. Vincent Sullivan started doing a cartoony kid adventure page called *Spike Spalding* and Whitney Ellsworth contributed an Orphan Annie simulacrum named *Little Linda* from the second issue on. We'll be hearing more of both these gentlemen.

Contributions began coming in over the transom, too. From out in Cleveland came material from Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster. The first feature of theirs to see print was *Doctor Occult*, which started in *New Fun* 6 (October 1935). The youthful partners signed that with the not-exactly musical pennames of Legar and Reuths. Dr. Occult, a ghost detective who "has sworn to combat supernatural evil in the world," gets right down to business. In the very first

THE THREE MUSKETEERS
by ALEXANDRE DUMAS
BRAD HARDY
BY - TOM HICKEY
BRAD AND PRINCE KARROS STAND HELPLESS AS THE GREAT UNDERWATER MONSTER SWEEPS TOWARD THEM.
A TURRET GUN SUDDENLY BELCHES FORTH A LIGHTNING LIKE BOLT.
IT STRIKES THE MONSTER, WHO LETS OUT AN EAR SPLITTING ROAR.

panel, "while passing an alley one evening," he runs into a tuxedo-clad vampire about to siphon some blood from a victim. Occult uses his magic symbol to scare him off.

The sixth issue of the magazine was dated October, 1935 and the next January, 1936. A long time between issues for a comic book that was struggling to be a monthly. That tardy seventh issue had the name *More Fun*. *More Fun* began shrinking and before many more months had passed it was the same size as *Famous Funnies* and the other new comic books showing up on the newsstands. The Major, and his new editors Vincent Sullivan and Whitney Ellsworth, kept adding color pages as well. And the magazine was looking more presentable as it went into it's second year.

It now appeared much less like a compilation of rejected newspaper Sundays. Most of the strips filled two pages, usually of six panels each. The straight stuff outweighed the humor and just about every adventure strip ended with the words "to be continued." Features still came and went, as did cartoonists. O'Mealia introduced *Bob Merritt and His Flying Pals*, about a "gentleman adventurer and inventor." Alex Blum took over *Ivanhoe*, an artist who called himself Sven Elven carried on *Treasure Island* and added *The The Three Musketeers*, Siegel and Shuster introduced a new cops and robbers strip titled *Radio Squad*. Tom Hickey assumed drawing *Wing Brady* and a science fiction feature called *Brad Hardy*. Creig Flessel, fresh from the pulps, came aboard in the twelfth issue to draw *Pep Morgan*, about a college jock. He also began doing many of the covers.

By the spring of 1937 the magazine was running fewer features, but was trying the daring innovation of giving most strips four whole pages. All the adventure stuff was still continued, but the heroes and heroines had more space to function in. The Major couldn't afford full color as yet and a dozen of his sixty four pages were black and white, another eight black, white and red. As 1937 ended six and eight page stories were the rule. Early the next year the major, for reasons we'll go into a bit further on, ceased to be a publisher. *More Fun*, and the other titles he'd started, passed into other hands.

1938 was the year of Superman, but *More Fun* paid him little heed for quite some time. The magazine kept plodding along with cowboys, cops and

RADIO SQUAD
featuring
SANDY KEAN
SIEGEL and SHUSTER
LAWYER TWIST OPENS THE TRIAL WITH A BRIEF STATEMENT
YOUR HONOR, I AM GOING TO PROVE ON BEHALF OF MY CLIENTS THAT THEY ARE BEING FRAMED BY A HIGH-HANDED, MEAN, VICIOUS GANG OF CROOKS!
SANDY KEAN, SUMMONED TO THE WITNESS STAND, CAUSES A SENSATION!
THE TESTIMONY OF THE DEFENDANTS HAS BEEN A PACK OF LIES AND HERE IS DEFINITE PROOF - ACTUAL INCRIMINATING PHOTOS SNAPPED ON THE SCENE!
THESE ARE INTERESTING VERY INTERESTING — BUT I MUST REFUSE THEIR ACCEPTANCE AS EVIDENCE ON THE GROUNDS THAT ANY SKILLED PHOTOGRAPHER CAN PREPARE FAKED PHOTOS
TELL THE COURT EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED
WELL, I WAS RUNNIN' A RESPECTABLE JOINT — BEER — CLUBS — WHEN THESE GANGSTER FRIENDS OF MR. WEEKERS BY ROBIN HIM AN' HAS ME HAULED OFF TO JAIL!
MR. WEEKERS TAKES THE STAND
I'M COLLECTIN' AN HONEST DEBT, SIR, WHEN I GETS BEAT UP AN' THROWN IN TH' WAGON, SEE? — SAY, A THING LIKE THAT IS LIABLE TO RUIN A GUY'S REPUTATION!
IT NOW BECOMES CLEAR THAT WITH EACH PASSING SECOND THAT JUSTICE IN THIS COURT IS A MARRIED MOCKERY!
BOTH PROSECUTION AND DEFENDANTS ARE NOW BIG HANDED HAND TO DISCREDIT KEAN, THAT THEY WILL BE SUCCESSFUL APPEARS CERTAIN UNTIL
— THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE HIMSELF TAKING MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS, STRIDES INTO THE COURTROOM!
JUST A MINUTE! THIS COURT HAS MADE A MOCKERY OF JUSTICE!
IT'S THE GOVERNOR!
I ASK YOU, GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY, IS THIS WHAT IS KNOWN AS JUSTICE? YOU HAVE HEARD MY CLIENTS TESTIFY AS TO THEIR INNOCENCE. DO YOU STILL DOUBT THAT THE WORD OF AN AUTHORITY-MAD BLUECOAT? I DEMAND THEY BE SET FREE AND FURTHER THAT THIS POLICEMAN BE PROSECUTED!
I'VE BEEN OBSERVING THIS CASE A LONG TIME AND FOR DIRTY COLLUSION THAT I'VE NEVER SEEN IT'S LIKE PERJURY AND BRIBERY COMES HAVE FEATURED IN THIS CASE AND I'M HERE TO SEE EVERY WRONG DOER GETS WHAT'S COMING
BUT GOVERNOR—!
A WEEK LATER —
THANKS TO YOU, HIS HONOR, I'M GRATEFUL FOR BEING ABLE TO RESUME MY DUTIES AS CHIEF OF POLICE AGAIN. BUT I'LL HAVE TO REFUSE YOUR OFFER, SIR
WHAT CAN I OFFER YOU MIGHT ACCEPT AS THE EXPRESSION OF MY GRATITUDE?
I DON'T WANT ANYTHING FOR MYSELF, BUT I'D LIKE TO SEE SOMETHING DONE FOR THE CRIPPLED CHILDREN
THE END

adventurers. A typical 1939 issue offered such features as *The Masked Ranger*, a Lone Ranger simulacrum by Jim Chambers; *Radio Squad*, Siegel and Shuster's only strip in the magazine now; *Johnnie Law*, a detective strip; *Red Coat Patrol*, which dealt with the Canadian Mounties and was nicely drawn by John Wade Hampton. Wing Brady was still getting sand in his boots and pirate fans could follow *The Buccaneer*. Bernard Bailey was the artist and writer on the seagoing extravaganza.

Issue 51 (January 1940) was pretty much the mixture as before. The Buccaneer, however, took a bride and announced his retirement from the high seas. There was a small panel at the end of his final voyage that depicted a strange greenfaced fellow in a purple hood and blue tunic. The copy inquired, "THE SPECTRE/Who is he??What is he?" The answer was to be found in the next issue. *More Fun* was finally getting around to entering the superhero field.

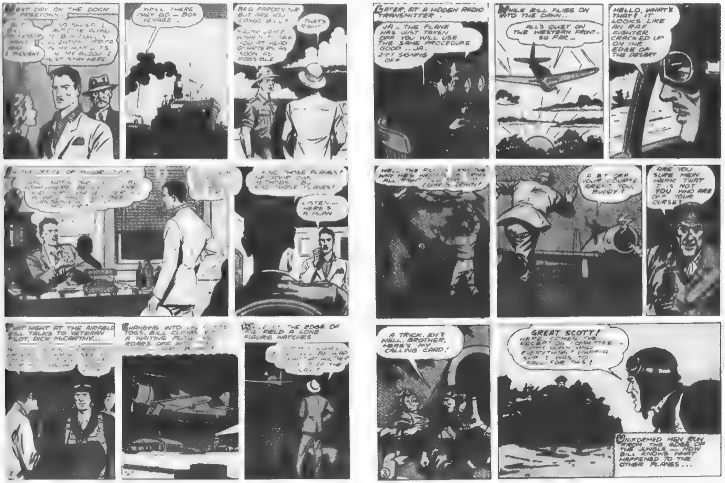
The Spectre, his color scheme straightened out to be green and grey, did indeed show up in 52. Written by Jerry Siegel and drawn by Bailey, the feature was one of the relatively few in which the hero began his career by dying. In the first segment of the two-issue origin story, tough redheaded cop Jim Corrigan is knocked off in classic gangster fashion by being tossed in the river in a barrel of cement. His spirit flies heavenward and a great light, presumably God, gives him a pep talk. "Your mission on Earth is unfinished...You shall remain earth-bound battling crime on your world, with supernatural powers, until all vestiges of it are gone!!" Saddled with what is obviously a fulltime job, Corrigan plummets back home. In some mystical fashion his spirit is able to go around looking just like his late body, down to sincere suit and tie. He decides, however, that he ought to have a costume in which to fight crime and we see him sewing up one. Donning a green cloak and hood and somehow making the pupils of his eyes disappear, Corrigan becomes the Spectre. His early adventures were fairly strange. He had frequent conversations with the Almighty, made occasional trips to the hereafter to get clues from departed souls and he once went "into the depths of infinity," which was mostly clouds, in search of a supernatural villain. He could walk through walls, turn crooks into skeletons and, on the covers at least, grow as tall as a

CONGO BILL
CAIRO
ACROSS THE ATLANTIC FROM SOUTH AMERICA COME WINGED BOLT PLANES FERRYING BRITISH AIR POWER IN THE MIDDLE EAST. A CONSTANT STREAM OF NEW BLOCKED FIGHTERS AND BOMBERS WINGING OVER THE WILY STRETCHES OF DESERT. THEN DISASTER STRIKES!
CAIRO - BRITISH ARMY HEADQUARTERS
MISTAKE!
HELLO, FREETOWN, CAIRO HERE! CONGO BILL HAS GOT THROUGH WITH DISPATCHES. HAPPY TO HAVE HIM BACK!
CAN YOU SOLVE THIS RIDDLE? WHAT GRIEVOUS WRONG HORRIBLY AVENGED WAS WROUGHT BY A SHADOW-SHROUDED FIGURE WHO SWIFTLY SLAYS AND SILENTLY FLEES IN THE SHADOWS?
THE VIGILANTE, OF COURSE!
GALLOPING GOLD!
AT THE GOLDEN CITY RACETRACK AND MOLGANZA CHIEF AS THE FLAG SPEEDS DOWN THE LINE...
C'MON WHITE CHIEF!
THE LEGEND OF THE LONE RANGER AND HIS FAITHFUL INDIAN COMPANION TONTO IS ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS IN THE ANNALS OF THE WILD WEST. THEIR EXPLOITS AGAINST OUTLAWS AND HOSTILE INDIANS ARE NOT THE STORIES WE'RE GOING TO TELL YOU TODAY.
TONTO, OLD PAL, WHAT'S THE MATTER?
OH, KEMOSABE, I'M SO HAPPY!

downtown office building. A grim chap, the Spectre enjoyed destroying crooks he went after. "One less vermin to peril decency," he observed after one such bit of vigilante work.

More Fun added another weird hero a few months later in 55 (May 1940). Dr. Fate was a Gardner Fox invention, drawn in a stylized but creepy fashion by Howard Sherman. "Dwelling apart from mankind in his lonely tower north of ghost-ridden Salem is the mysterious Dr. Fate," an early caption explained, "who calls upon secret and ancient sources for the power with which he fights unusual crimes." Unusual indeed. Fate, who wore a blue and gold superhero suit and a metal helmet that completely hid his face, specialized in besting ancient evil Mayan gods, combating globemen from outer space, defeating horrors summoned from the cosmic void and counseling young women who suspected they might be wereleopards. In one adventure with his recurrent enemy Wotan the Wizard he went first to Hell for a chat with the skeletal boatman on the River Styx and then up to talk to God, again depicted as a blinding light.

The month after the good doctor a more down to earth hero was added in the person of Congo Bill. A Jungle Jim simulacrum, his adventures were drawn by George Papp. The following year it was more costumed good guys. Johnny Quick, King of Speed, zipped onto the scene in 71 (September 1941). He got his swiftness by reciting the formula 3X2 (9YZ) 4A, a bit trickier to toss off than Shazam. His finest hours came a few issues later, when the gifted Mort Meskin took over the artwork. Aquaman and Green Arrow both came aboard in 73. DC's answer to Sub-Mariner, Aquaman was the invention of Mort Weisinger and artist Paul Norris. Weisinger also cooked up the adventures of the modern Robin Hood and his boy sidekick Speedy. Papp drew the exploits of the "wizard archers of the world," who traveled in a multipurpose vehicle known as the Arrowplane. More likeable than the ghostly Spectre and the mystical Dr. Fate, Green Arrow and Speedy soon become the stars of the magazine and got most of the covers plus thirteen pages right at the front of the book. There they fought crime with bows and some of the most unusual arrows ever seen. Not until 101 early in 1945 did another new costumed hero show up in the pages of *More Fun*. That was the diminutive but formidable Superboy, who stuck around until the magazine



became all funny a few issues later and then leaped over to *Adventure*.

Undaunted by the lack of much success for his tabloid-sized *New Fun*, the intrepid Major Nicholson had brought out a second magazine in 1935. In shape, size and looks the premier issue was close to what would become the standard format for comic books, except that *New Comics* contained eighty pages and had an uncoated, nonglossy cover. Like its predecessor, this new comic book offered a hodgepodge of adventure and comedy strips mixed with a variety of text features. On the adventurous side in the early issues were such as *Castaway Island, Slim and Tex, Captain Quick, Dale Daring* and *Federal Men*. Included in the funny stuff you found *Dickie Dare, Sagebrush N' Cactus* and *J. Worthington Blimp, Esq.* The obligatory text story often ran to six pages or more and there were columns devoted to radio, puzzles, movies, book reviews, magic tricks, cartoon tips and letters from the readers.

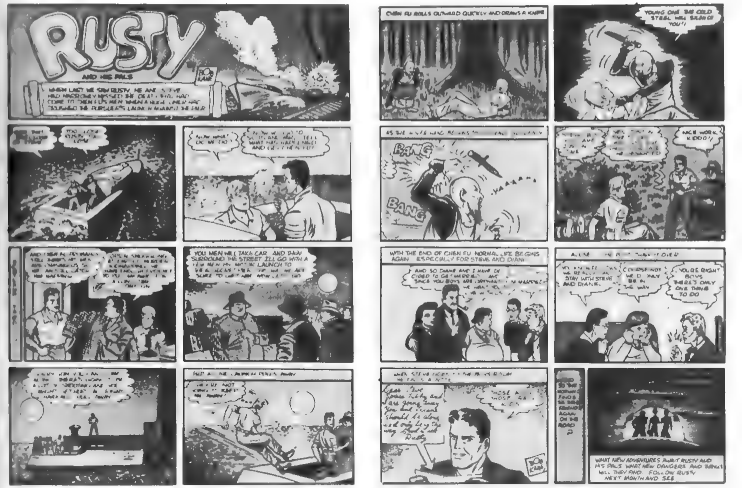
Work by Siegel and Shuster, the dynamic duo from Cleveland, started appearing with 2 (January 1936). Their *Federal Men* was a G-Man serial starring Steve Carson, whose grim sharpfeatured profile probably made even Dick Tracy envious. Almost from the start the young artist-writer team, unlike most of their contemporaries, encouraged reader response to their strip. At the conclusion of the four page episode in 3 they offered a "FREE original drawing of Steve Carson along with a personal message" for the fan who sent in "the most interesting and constructive letter." With the fifth issue the Junior Federal Men Club was inaugurated. Very soon Siegel and Shuster betrayed the fact they were longtime science fiction enthusiasts. After introducing a gang of villains who operate out of a mysterious sub, they accelerated to a crook invasion of Washington, DC with a gigantic tank. Next came a mammoth robot, a metal colossus built along the lines of King Kong. Steve Carson helps defeat "the scientific criminals who sought to capture America," and then it's back to machine guns and dope rings for a spell.

The first Tarzan impersonator in comics burst forth in *New* 5. By the time Sandor set up shop as a wildman the possibilities for animal surrogate parents had lessened some, apes, wolves, tigers and lions having already been spoken for. "In the deep jungles of Northern India lives a strange white

youth known as Sandor, raised from infancy by a pack of wild dogs that now acknowledge him as their leader." Despite his humble upbringing, the goldenskinned Sandor did a commendable job. Art was by Homer Fleming. *Steve Conrad*, also added with the fifth issue, was a handsomely drawn strip about a daring young "adventurer, scientist and inventor" by Creig Flessel. Tom Hickey's *The Golden Dragon* started in 6. Set in Mongolia, it dealt with the efforts of a pair of out of work mercenary soldiers to find the fabulous lost treasure of Ghengis Khan. The eighth issue saw the major introducing a four-page adventure serial he wrote himself. Entitled *The Blood Pearls* and illustrated by newspaper oldtimer Munson Paddock, this dealt with theft, intrigue, romance, violence and murder in the Philippines, a locale Nicholson knew firsthand.

Without a doubt the best funny stuff in the first issue of *New* was supplied by a teenaged Brooklyn cartoonist named Sheldon Mayer. Determined to sell his work, the enterprising youth had already been haunting all the Manhattan-based newspaper syndicates. When asked recently how he first got together with the major, he replied, "I just walked into the office. Because I saw the stuff on the newsstands and I wrote down the address. I'd been doing that all along with all sorts of things." Mayer drew two features for the magazine, both adapted from unsold newspaper strip ideas. *J. Worthington Blimp, Esq.*, as the title suggests, starred a plump windbag who shared some of the attributes of W.C. Fields and Popeye's pal Wimpy. The continuity had to do with Blimp's attempts to travel across the county by bicycle. The strip has some of the freewheeling and rowdy flavor of Billy DeBeck's *Barney Google*. In *The Strange Adventures of Mr. Weed* Mayer played with fantasy and time travel. The stories and dialogue in both strips were bright and even at eighteen Mayer was drawing like a pro. His stuff looked funny, not just the people but the furniture, the props and the backgrounds.

With the twelfth issue came a name change and *New* was transformed into *New Adventure*. For years one of the best markets for Major Nicholson's fiction had been the prestigious pulpwood magazine named *Adventure*, whose untrimmed pages he shared with Talbot Mundy, Harold Lamb and scores of other top-rated fictioneers. Obviously the Major borrowed the


RUSTY
AND HIS PALS
BANG
BANG
BANG

FEDERAL MEN
JERRY SIEGEL
MART BAILEY
RUTSKA, NOTORIOUS RACKETEER, PERSONALLY VISITS ONE OF HIS BALKING "CLIENTS"
LOOK HERE, PUNK! YOU KEEP ON PAYING PROTECTION MONEY OR SOMETHING'S LIABLE TO HAPPEN TO YOUR PRETTY WATER HOUSE!
GET OUT OF HERE! I WON'T PAY YOU ANOTHER CENT!
I'LL SHOW THAT GUY HE CAN'T FOOL AROUND WITH RUTSKA!
SHORTLY AFTER
HELLO? FIRE?... OWN HIM!
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE SHOT HIM! REMEMBER, THAT'S IN CASE WE EVER GET ANY PROBLEMS!
I SHOOT WHO I EVER PLEASE!
WHAT'S THE IDEA?
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?
GET YOUR KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT RUTSKA? ABOUT A FIRE? YOU'RE GOING TO THE STATION!
LATER... POLICE DROP IN ON RUTSKA
MY LAWYERS WILL FIX THE $5000 BAIL AND BE GOODBYE COPPERS!
SOMETHING WRONG HERE! SOMETHING WRONG!
NO RUTSKA STREAKING HERE COMES!
THAT EVENING...
COTTON CARVER
AFTER REVOLVING RUGGERS TO KING MARC IN HIS FIGHT AGAINST THE REBEL JAGAR, COTTON IS INVITED BY QUEEN DELLA OF BARLINDA TO VISIT HER HOME WITH THEM & OBEN KING MAL AND SONJA, RULER OF THALA
IN THE AIRSHIP THAT LEADS THE FLEET
THEY SIGHT O STAN... VAR...LINDA
MARC: BARLINDA, DO YOU WELCOMED OF ALL THE CITIES OF THE INNER WORLD TO NOT HAVE TO HOW MY PEOPLE CAN MY WILL TAKE THEIR NEW FREEDOM
THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO LEARN, DELLA LET'S MEET THEM TOGETHER...
DELLA: I AM GLAD TO SEE OUR QUEEN HAS TO DELLA!
IN A REGAL FASHION, EACH OF GOES THEM
YET HAVE MADE NO MATTER HOW MUCH WORSHIPPED
WELCOMED YOU, QUEEN... BUT—YOUR PRIVATE CAPTAINS ARE IN THE THRONEROOM... AWAITING AN AUDIENCE. THEY HAVE HEARD YOU SWORE ALLEGIANCE TO ME!
THAT'S WHY I'VE THEM COTTON. WILL YOU COME?
IN THE THRONEROOM—
GREETINGS MY CAPTAINS
GREETINGS, DELLA A WISE QUEEN, TO A WORLD
I AM HEAD MAN UNDER YOUNG FATHER DELLA. IN IT TRUE FRIENDSHIP FOR THE NEW MARC.
TRUE IT IS, SURETY. OUR FRIENDSHIP IS REAL.
I HAVE BROUGHT HIM HERE TO SHOW I WISH HIM TREATED AS —

Caniff and Noel Sickes, Christman had already arrived at a creditable version that was inspired by his two gifted AP predecessors. In this short story he uses layouts and shots that no one else was attempting in comic books at the time.

Siegel and Shuster's *Federal Men* continued appearing now with artwork by assistants such as Wayne Boring, Barry O'Neill, last seen combating the master Oriental scourge Fang Gow over in *More Fun*, transferred to *Adventure*. With issue 35 Cotton Carver joined the crew. A "world adventurer," he was a man used to "danger in many and varied shapes and forms." His saga quickly became science fictional and had CC dropping in on a lost world inside Earth. The writer was Gardner Fox and the artist one George Newman, who had a fancy signature and a style quite close to that affected by the young Jack Kirby when he was imitating Alex Raymond.

Finally, and without much fanfare, a costumed crimefighter was introduced to the magazine's pages. The Sandman made his debut in 40 (July 1939). Written by Gardner Fox and drawn by Christman, he wasn't in the superhero mold. With his cape, slouch hat, business suit, gasmask and gasgun, the Sandman was close to radio's Green Hornet. The new hero was a bored playboy in everyday life. Christman drew the feature in a lively and sophisticated fashion. He must've had some influence on the story lines, since two of the four episodes he drew dealt with airplanes. He was unorthodox in rendering his gasmasked hero and didn't always draw him in his trademark costume. If the Sandman had to go swimming, he appeared in shorts and gasmask. When he took to the air he wore flying togs and his mask. Later heroes didn't dare show up for work, no matter what the chore, in anything but their stock uniform. Ogden Whitney and Flessel both drew the Sandman after Christman left.

The first honest-to-goodness superhero to grace *Adventure*'s pages was Bernard Bailey's Hourman, who was introduced in 48 (March 1904). In an introductory caption we are told that a young chemist named Rex "Tick-Tock" Tyler has recently discovered "Miraclo, a powerful chemical that transforms him from a meek, mild scientist to the underworld's most formidable foe...with Miraclo he has for *one hour* the power of chained lightning-speed...But unless he performs his deeds of strength and daring within

JOHNNY THUNDER
Johnny Thunder
EATS APPARENTLY THINKS OUR HERO JOHNNY THUNDER IS SOMETHING YOU SHOULDN'T EAT! THAT'S WHY HE CALLS HIM THUNDERBOX! TO PLAY WITH THIS HERO-BOX YOU NEED TO COMBINE WITH UNCANNY RESULTS JOHNNY NEVER KNOWS WHERE HE'S AT WITH WHICH END UP!
NOW ACCORDING TO THE BIBLIA A-Z ALL JOHNNY WAS SAID TO HAVE IN PLAY AMERICA COMES TO SAY YOU, HE BOUGHT A NEW HAT FOR THE NEXT HOUR!
RECORDER JOHNNY JONES WAS FIRED FROM HIS NEW JOB
DRAT! I DON'T WANT THIS OLD FIREMAN'S JOB ANYHOW! AND IF I'M A SECRET AGENT FOR THAT G-8 THEN I'M A MONKEY'S UNCLE!
AW, OLD CHIEF'S ONLY MAD CAUSE I'M NEW AT THE JOB! I'LL SHOW HIM I'M GOOD!
YEAH, CHIEF, I'M GLAD TO BE HERE!
BUT TAKE A BRIBE? IT WHAT JOHNNY JUST SAID! SAY YOU! HE GOT THUNDERBOLT POWER IS NOTHING A FOUR ALARM BLAZE NOW FOR THE NEXT HOUR!
THE REST COMPLETELY OUT!
WHAT'S THAT? A FIRE? BUT I DON'T WANT TO BE A FIREMAN!
BUT WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?
I'M GOING TO BE A DOG!
BUT AS THEY ROUND THE CORNER INTO THE BYRD THEY TURN THE FIRE HOSE
SPRAY OF THE ROARING WATER SWEEPS THE DOG AWAY!
AND THE NEXT MINUTE HE IS ALL OVER THE PLACE! HE RUNS AND HIDES AND HOWLS AND THEN HE RUNS BACK AND HOWLS AND HIDES AND THEN HE RUNS AND HOWLS AND HIDES AND THEN HE RUNS AND HOWLS AND HIDES AND THEN HE RUNS

SORRY TO BE SO ABRUPT BUT SPEED IS ESSENTIAL!
NEVER YOU! I NAME YOU TRAITOR! WILL GET ME OUT OF HERE! I WON'T WORK!
TONY! TAKE CARE OF HER! NO BOUGHT STUFF! WE'RE THE ONES TO PROVE THAT TO BREAK THIS RACKET AGAINST INSURANCE COMPANIES! LIKE MY PAL DOUG WHO IS GOING TO LOSE HIS JOB!
JUST IN CASE THEY TRY TO BLAME SOMEONE ELSE!
BUT S'YOU CAN ENJOY! DOLCH A GOLDEN! I WAS NOT KNOWED!
HOW? IT'S USELESS, WES DON'T BELIEVE TELL THE PATRON, THE SANDMAN IS CHARGED HERE?
SUPPOSE THE SANDMAN HE'S THERE, TO HELP DOUG? HE MIGHT BE FORCING THEM TO FIX THE NUMBERS! I DON'T GIVE UP HOPE! I'M SURE SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN!
I HOPE SO!
THE CALL HE CAME ON THE SANDMAN THE SEE! 1941
FADE INTO THE NIGHT CLUB SCENE
AS YOU SAY! WELL THANKS FOR CHEERING ME UP!
OH, DO AS YOU SAY! WELL I'M GOING TO CHEER AWAY THE AFTER NOON AT HOME, SEE YOU LATER.
GOOD OLD DOUG! LITTLE DOES HE SUSPECT THE WORLD'S DOOM!
BUT DOUG'S NOT TOO STAY! IS HARD TO DO IT!
WILL YOU CONFESS YOUR PLOT TO DOOM THE ALLIANCE COMPANY THAT INSURED YOU AGAINST CRATON'S?
SAND - IT'S SAND YOU'RE - THE SANDMAN!
RIGHT THIS IS FIRST TIME! NOW DO YOU TALK?
THE NITE CLUB IS DESERTED AT THIS HOUR, BUT I THINK I'LL FIND SOMEONE
I DIDN'T EXPECT THIS!

we'll see, soon as Simon & Kirby showed up. Among the artists who succeed Burnley were Mort Meskin and the talented and almost always anonymous Emil Gershwin.

The Shining Knight came on stage in 66, nicely drawn by Creig Flessel. Wearing golden armor and mounted on a winged horse, he had been frozen for several centuries. Thawed out he became a sort of reverse Connecticut Yankee. The character who was to unseat all of the magazine's hopeful and gifted heroes had been in the magazine for awhile, but nobody was paying much attention to him. Then in 69 (December 1941) the Sandman got a new look—an updated costume with yellow tunic and tights, purple cowl, cape and boots and a boy companion named Sandy. It was a whole new ball game. Despite what you may have read in *The Comic Book Price Guide* and elsewhere, Bob Kane had nothing to do with this transformation. The artist who turned Sandman into a union-suiter was Paul Norris. After just three issues he was replaced by Simon & Kirby. And that phase of the nocturnal nemesis' career is treated in detail elsewhere in this issue. As is the rejuvenation wrought in the life and times of Manhunter by S&K.

One more costumed crimefighter set up shop in 1942. He was, though, a pintsized fellow and never took the profession too seriously. *Genius Jones* was scripted by Alfred Bester, before he'd written any radio scripts for *The Shadow* and long before he'd produced such memorable science fiction novels as *The Demolished Man*. The drawing was by Stan Kaye, a talented humorous artist who unfortunately worked only as an inker on such features as Superman in later years. The Genius Jones stories blended mystery, intrigue, satire, romance, patriotism and fantasy as the diminutive hero used his encyclopedic knowledge to solve such puzzles as The Case of the Off-Key Crooner and The Case of the Love-Sick Submarine.

In the spring of the following year Mike Gibbs, Guerilla was added. An American newsman in Europe, Gibbs decided to fight the Nazis and start a "one-man guerilla war!" Like most foreign correspondents, he wore a trenchcoat. Irv Tirman was the original artist, followed by Edmond Good. Not until early in 1946 were any significant further changes made in the lineup. Then the Green Arrow, Johnny

SLAM BRADLEY
BY JERRY SIEGEL AND JOE SHUSTER
AFTER A HALF-DAY SPENT IN SHOPPING FOR NEW SUITS, PRIVATE DETECTIVE SLAM BRADLEY AND HIS PAL SHORTY MORGAN ENTER THE LATEST LEVIATHAN DEPARTMENT STORE WHEN THEY SEE---
HEY SLAM! THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG THERE!
YOU'RE RIGHT! IT'S AN ATTEMPTED HOLDUP!
COLBY'S DEPARTMENT STORE
UNHAND THAT GAL, YOU VARMINT!
NICE WORK, SHORTY HERB IS YOU!
BUT AS A POLICEMAN APPROACHES THE TWO MEN DISAPPEAR IN THE CROWD...
WHAT'S GOING ON? OH IT'S YOU, SLAM! HELLO, SHORTY!
I'M GOING TO ASK THE YOUNG LADY TO DANCE...
HOW LISTEN, SLAM, JUST HOLD ME!
HONEST THEY TRIED TO SNATCH HER!
WHEW, HERE'S REGISTRATION DOOR--A THIEF!
NOW BACK THE TEN ANGRY MILLIONS THAT MUST HAVE BEEN HIS DAUGHTER, SAY, THIS IS REALLY SOMETHING TO LIVE TO REMEMBER OR THIS!

MALONE
YOUR PATIENT IS READY, DOCTOR.
GOOD! THAT'S DETECTIVE DONNELLY, ISN'T IT?
IN A LARGE CITY HOSPITAL AT MIDNIGHT
THAT'S RIGHT! HE'S WORKING ON THE DRUG-SMUGGLING CASE, ISN'T HE?
I GUESS SO. HOW SHOULD I KNOW?
A ROUTINE CASE OF APPENDICITIS
THE OPERATION PROCEEDS REGULARLY
HE'S TAKING THE ETHER WELL, DOCTOR.
HE'LL RECOVER.
ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL OPERATION TO YOUR CREDIT, DOCTOR!
HIS PULSE IS LOW! I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT!
BUT THE NIGHT NURSE FINDS SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE DETECTIVE
DOCTOR BRAND, OPERATED LAST EVENING. I CAN'T FATHOM THIS! BRAND IS A GOOD SURGEON, TOO!
IN THE MORNING THE PATIENT IS DEAD!

Quick and Aquaman, plus Superboy, were given berths after *More Fun* switched to comedy. Sandman, Starman, Mike Gibbs and Genius Jones were handed their walking papers.

The last DC title that Major Nicholson had a hand in, and the one that was to give the line its name, finally arrived in 1937. Originally announced as having a December, 1936 cover date—"Just what YOU ordered! A high-stepping detective magazine in pictures!"—*Detective Comics* was delayed three months and hit the stands dated March, 1937. That allowed the rival *Detective Picture Stories* to show up first and earn the title of the first comic book devoted to a single theme. The Major's magazine offered a variety of detectives in its first issues. Speed Saunders, Cosmo, AKA the Phantom of Disguise, Bruce Nelson—a private eye in Chinatown mystery written by Nicholson, Spy, Buck Marshall the Range Detective and Slam Bradley.

Since there were fewer characters in *Detective*, the private eyes and secret agents had more space for their capers—up to ten or twelve pages per issue. As the months went by new investigators came and went—Mr. Chang, Larry Steele, Steve Malone, Inspector Kent of Scotland Yard and the masked detective known as the Crimson Avenger. Fu Manchu, the wicked Asian mastermind who'd inspired Fang Gow, was also to be found lurking in eleven issues. This was not original material, however, but reprints of the early 1930s newspaper strip by Leo O'Mealia.

Siegel and Shuster had two features in *Detective*—*Spy* and *Slam Bradley*. The more interesting of them was Bradley which dealt with a two-fisted private eye and his partner Shorty Morgan. The team had thirteen pages to work with and they experimented with layouts—including full page splash panels—that would later become standard in comic books but that were unusual in the days when many features were still being laid out like newspaper Sunday pages. In a recent interview Joe Shuster suggested that part of their inventiveness was the product of expediency—"We had to work very fast, so Jerry suggested that we save time by putting less than six panels to a page; four panels or three panels, and sometimes two panels. I think one day we just had one panel to a page. The kids loved it because it was so spectacular. I could do so much more. Later on the editors stopped us

HARRY STEELE
by Lee Boot
YOU'VE GOT TO HELP US, STEELE! THESE THUGS ARE GETTING MORE DESPERATE EVERY DAY!
AND YOU SAY ACTIVISTS HAVE AN EVIL, FOUL GRUDGE AGAINST YOUR LIFE!
I HATE TO EVEN SUGGEST IT, BUT I HAVE A NEPHEW WHO IS MY ONLY HEIR
HE WILL TAKE A NEPHEW ANY WEEK NOW, MY DEAR NEPHEW!
I WANT TO KNOW YOU BETTER, NEPHEW! LET'S GO FOR A PRIVATE DETECTIVE!

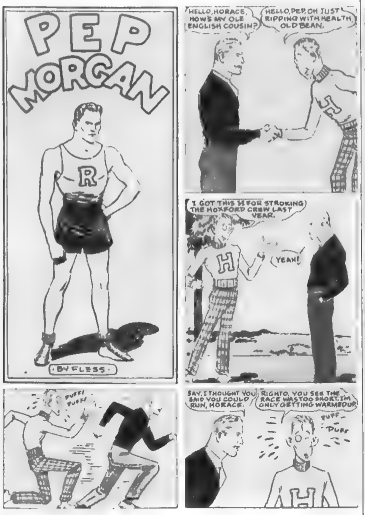
YOUNG AMERICA'S HERO!
CLIFF CROSBY
CHIC!
CLIFF CROSBY IS ABOARD A STEAMER BOUND FOR THE DUTCH WEST INDIES. HIS DESTINATION IS CURAÇOA. BUT ALL PERSONS ABOARD ARE UNDER THE IMPRESSION OF CLIFF AND HIS PARTY ON THE ROCKY BEACH OF THE UNINHABITED ISLAND, A FEW MILES AWAY.
WELL, CROSBY, LET'S DANCE HERE AND SEE —
— GOOD HEAVENS —
BEWARE, MISTER CROSBY!

from doing that, they said the kids were not getting their money's worth."

Detective managed to hire some of the more talented young artists around. Will Ely drew *Larry Steele* first, relinquishing it to Ken Ernst, who gave way to Irwin Hasen. Flessel started *Speed Saunders* and was followed by Fred Guardineer. *Steve Malone, Ad-*about a hard-hitting DA, was drawn by Don Lynch and written by Gardner Fox. Bob Kane, who drew *Rusty and his Gang* for *Adventure*, contributed one page fillers to *Detective* about a bumbling, derby-hatted detective named Oscar the Gumshoe. In *Detective* 27 (May 1939) Kane, in collaboration with scripter Bill Finger, introduced Batman and that changed the destiny of the magazine and gave DC one of its three most popular characters. For the complete story of the life and times of the caped crusader you have but to see our last issue, *C:GA* 5.

After Batman two more plainclothes operatives were added, Red Logan in 35 and Cliff Crosby, a crimefighting newsman, in 37. Airwave, a greenclad crimebuster with roller skates built into his boots, arrived in 60. Simon & Kirby's Boy Commandos, the first non-detectives in the magazine's history, took up residence in 64 (June 1942). *Detective* continues to this day and has had many more investigators and cops in its pages over the years, from Pow Wow Smith to the Manhunter from Mars.

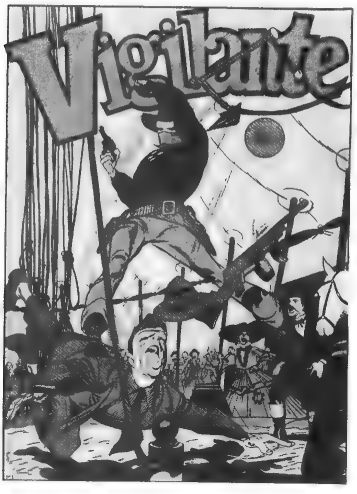
Harry Donenfeld and J.S.Liebowitz, who took over Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson's ventures and renamed the company Detective Comics, Inc., apparently had little notion what they had unleashed upon the world when they added *Action Comics* to their list in the spring of 1938. Featured on the cover, in the act of tossing an automobile, was Superman, the character Siegel and Shuster had been trying to sell for years in any format—newspaper strip, comic book, what-have-you. And taking up the first thirteen pages was the Man of Steel's first adventure, a rather disjointed affair pasted up from cut up sample strips by the Cleveland team. M.C.Gaines, about whom more later, had suggested using the feature, after being prodded by Sheldon Mayer. "When Harry Donenfeld first saw that cover of Superman holding that car in the air," Mayer has recalled, "he really got worried. He felt that nobody would believe it, that it was ridiculous...crazy." Possibly because


PEP MORGAN
BY FLESS
HELLO, HORACE. HOW'S MY OLD ENGLISH COUSIN?
HELLO, PEP. OH, JUST RIPPING WITH HEALTH OLD BEAN.
I GOT THIS SCAR STROKING THE HOPKINS CREW LAST YEAR.
YEAH!
SAY, I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU COULD OUT-RUN, HORACE.
RIGHTO. YOU SEE THE RACE WAS TOO SHORT. I'M ONLY GETTING WARMED UP.
PUFF PUFF
PUFF PUFF
OOFF
UGH!
THIS IS NOT FAIR IN MY COUNTRY WE JUMP HORIZONTALLY NOT VERTICALLY.
WAS THE SHOT PUT TOO HEAVY?
NO-IT'S TOO LIGHT. I STRAINED MY ARM.
MY WORD WHAT HOW?
LET'S SWIM ACROSS THE HARBOR AND BACK.
SAY I SWAM THE ENGLISH CHANNEL
SAVE YOUR WIND, LET'S GO.
PEP BEATS HORACE BY 200 YARDS.
BEAT ME, OF COURSE. IT WASN'T FAIR. HOW DO YOU EXPECT ME TO SWIM IN STALE SALT WATER. I MUST HAVE FRESH WATER FOR SPEED.
FLESS

of this the next few covers didn't show Superman or even mention him. Drawn by O'Mealia, they showed us scenes of plausible action and adventure involving airplanes, Arabs, South Sea natives and Royal Mounties. Even after Superman was allowed back on the front of the magazine he alternated for a year or more with more scenes of down to earth violence, these rendered by Guardineer.

The public, mostly Depression-reared kids who wanted the most they could get for their dimes, was not as slow to catch on as the folks at DC. They recognized Superman as something special from the moment they saw him lift that automobile over his head. Of course, that Superman of nearly a half century ago was not the multimedia showboat we have with us today. For one thing, he couldn't fly in his early days and got over those tall buildings because he was a terrific leaper. And although he tackled a "mad scientific genius" now and then and combated an occasional deadly purple plague, he always had time for widows, orphans and working stiffs. He was a sort of Dear Abby with muscles.

Superman shared *Action* with a mixed bag of second bananas—a cowboy name of Chuck Dawson, a world adventurer known as Tex Thomson, our old chum Pep Morgan, Marco Polo himself and Zatara. Billed as a Master Magician, Zatara got involved in some pretty grim and grisly escapades in his first years. Originally intended as an imitation of Mandrake, and created by Gardner Fox and Fred Guardineer, the Zatara strip soon began exploring areas of the weird and occult that would've caused the urbane Mandrake to hide under his bed. During his first two years on the job Zatara met up with the mummy of Cheops; visited Atlantis and battled sea serpents and a giant octopus; encountered, while hunting for a fountain of youth in Brazil, a zombie queen whose throne was surrounded by huge slithering snakes; defeated a hooded villain who had trained giant condors to murder people; tangled with another ancient evil queen who exchanged her withered old body for that of a lovely young girl. As time went on Zatara, whose immense magical powers all stemmed from his discovery that words said backwards had unfailing effect—"Sallirog llaf ot ruoy htaed!" he once advised some gorrilas, became more sedate. Early on though, he got almost as many pages as Superman each issue and he was the only other



JUST A MINUTE!
STAY WHERE YOU ARE OR I WILL THE GIRL!
IT LOOKS LIKE I WAS TOO SMART FOR YOUR BOY FRIEND.
PERHAPS YOU'RE TOO SMART FOR YOUR OWN GOOD!
BUT SUPERMAN IS FAR FROM BEATEN. DOWN A STAIRWAY HE WHIZZES...
HE ISN'T FINISHED WITH ME YET!
NOW TO MAKE MYSELF NICE AND COZY!
HE'S NOWHERE IN SIGHT. MY CHANCE TO RUN YOU ARE MAKE A GETAWAY.
-NOW!-?
OHHH WHOA!
AND LET THAT BE A LESSON TO YOU!
YOU CAN RUN BUT YOU CAN'T HIDE. I'LL TURN THESE CRIMINALS AND TURNED OVER TO THE POLICE.
THANKS JUST IN TIME TO MAKE THE NEXT EDITION!
LATER... THE DAILY PLANET...
OH, NO! YOU DIDN'T SCOOP ME!
IT HAD TO BE SUPERMAN TO ASSIST ME, TO MAKE A GOOD SHOWING TOO!
THE END

character to appear on an *Action* cover.

Among the notable characters who joined *Action Comics* in later issues were Clip Carson, Three Aces, Congo Bill and the Vigilante. Clip Carson, a soldier of fortune, was produced by Bob Kane with a little help from Jerry Robinson and Bill Finger. The Three Aces were "winged soldiers-of-fortune—sick of war, its futility and tragedy—(who)pledge themselves to a new world of adventure" and roam the world "working for peace and sanity." The first five aerial adventures of the trio were drawn by Bert Christman in his best *Scorchy Smith* manner. Christman, who shared the ideals of his heroes, became a combat pilot himself and was killed while with the Flying Tigers in Burma in the first months of the Second World War.

Congo Bill in *Action* was a livelier fellow than he'd been in *More Fun*. He covered more of the world, got involved in intelligence work. Fred Ray was the new artist and did some of his finest work. Ray's final story was in 51 (August 1942) and was an impressive one dealing with the Flying Tigers. Another excellent artist, Mort Meskin, introduced The Vigilante in 42 (November 1941). The character was described as a "heroic champion of law and order, who battles Twentieth Century criminals with weapons of the range in a ceaseless one-man stampede against all lawlessness." In addition to range weapons the Vigilante utilized a high-powered motorcycle. Meskin's only problem early on was in getting Vig's Stetson to sit on his head right. Once he conquered that, there was no stopping him. For quite a spell Meskin only pencilled, with such as George Roussos and Joe Kubert inking.

DC's penultimate entry on their monthly list was *Star Spangled Comics*, which went on sale August 6, 1941, bearing an October cover date. Highly touted, with a three page promo ad in *Action Comics*, the new title was described as "the result of months of careful research into just what sort of features you readers DEMAND!" The designated stars were the Star-Spangled Kid and Stripesy—"arch-foes of hate and intolerance, champions of LIBERTY and JUSTICE, the embodiment of the TRUE AMERICAN SPIRIT! In short, they are...YOU." Superman appeared in the sneak preview of the feature "to remind you that JERRY SIEGEL, who writes my adventures, also writes this terrific new feature." Then we see Siegel seated at

FIGHTING LOIS IN PERIL, THE REAL DAWN MAY BRONTE SWERLY, THOR IN AN UNEXPECTED BURST OF STRENGTH, RIPS OPEN HIS CAGE!
THE DAWN MAN!
STOP HIM!
RUSHY DIVE BEFORE THE ATTACK OF THE REAL DAWN MAN WHO HAS LEAPT TO LOIS' AID.
STOP IT! LET HIM GO!
PERHAPS YOU WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE SOME FAMOUS LAST WORDS FOR POSTERITY?
NO - JUST GIVE ME A SMOKE! THAT'LL BE OK
BULL IS SEEN A FEW FEET AWAY, THEN FLIPS T. TOWARD MCCARTHY'S SMOKING PLANE.
A CHANCE - BUT I'LL TAKE IT! UNLESS THE BLOKE'S SUFFERED FUSELAGE!
SECOND LATER, THE SMOKE PLANE CRASHES WITH A HUGE EXPLOSION AS HEARD THE SOUND OF DIVING MOTORS!
AS THE PREHISTORIC MAN COWERS, THE PROFESSOR
THEY'RE KILLED!
AND THEN'S ME!
SUPERMAN'S X-RAY VISION INSTANTLY ACCURATELY SIZES UP THE SITUATION - HE CRASHES THRU THE WALL!
SPEED!
BEATING THE BULLETS TO THEIR TARGET, SUPERMAN REMOVES LOIS TO SAFETY.
THAT'S NO PLACE FOR A LADY!
RUNNING BACK, HE DASHES FULL INTO THE GUN FIRE.
HE KEEPS FIRING!
BUT IT DON'T DO NO GOOD!
CRASHING INTO THE TWINS, SUPERMAN CONFUSES THEIR PUNY OPPOSITION.
YOU'LL NOT DO NO BETTER THAN THEM BOYS.
BUT RACING THRU THE SECRET PANEL, DUKE BRADY SEES LOIS...
LET GO OF ME!
OH, NO! NOT WHILE YOU CAN PROTECT ME WITH A SHIELD!
THEN WHILE COLONEL HITT'S AND HIS MEN STARE IN AMAZEMENT, BRITISH FLARES LAND ON THE FLOOR LIT BRIGHT!
QUICK! BACK TO OUR GUNS! WE CAN STILL DESTROY THE WHOLE SQUADRON!
BUT BULL, FORGETTING IN THE CONFUSION, HAS MARCHED THE GUNS FIRST
ONE MORE STEP, COLONEL HITT'S AND I'LL SHOOT!
A FEW MINUTES LATER
BULL, YOU FORGOT THAT THERE'S STILL A PILOT IN THE PLANE! I SAVED HIM FROM BURNING TO DEATH!
SURE AND IT'S A PERFECT FRIEND!

his typewriter and promising, "I'm going to give you the sort of stories you really like!"

The first issue offered two stories about the Kid, the first an unprecedented twenty pages and the second fifteen. Art was by gag man Hal Sherman, having his first try at adventure. Sharing the lineup were Captain X, a phantom flyer who defended England in an atomic-powered airship made of blue plastic alloy; the Tarantula, a purple and yellow-suited crime fighter—"He weaves a web of doom around the lifelines of the underworld;" and Armstrong of the Army, an intelligence officer.

Apparently, as has also often been true on Madison Avenue, all that careful research as to what we wanted didn't pay off. With 7 (April 1942) *Star Spangled* got a drastic overhaul. Simon and Kirby, lured over from Marvel, drew the streamlined cover that introduced the debut of the Newsboy Legion. The Kid and Stripesy were relegated to the back of the book. Robotman, done in a Superman shop style, and T.N.T., aided by Dan the Dyna-Mite, were added to the staff to replace Captain X and Armstrong. Penniless Palmer, the unlucky private eye who'd first showed up in 6, came back to stay in 8. The magazine thereafter managed a fairly stable roster for the next several years.

Under new management and with the help of Superman, DC prospered. The line didn't fully assume a group identity until the spring of 1940, when their brand, a small circle proclaiming a DC Publication, began to appear on all covers. The seal was amended to read A Superman DC Publication in the autumn of the following year. By that time Detective Comics, Inc. was publishing well over a dozen titles. *Superman* had been added in 1939, *Batman* in 1940 and *World's Finest*, a continuation of the earlier *World's Fair* annuals, in 1941. Quite a contrast to the shaky enterprise begun by Major Nicholson only a few years before.

THE ALL AMERICAN BRANCH

Late in 1938 M.C. Gaines, already a pioneer in the infant comic book industry, entered into an agreement to produce a series of comic books that would be published under the DC umbrella. The initial titles, edited by the youthful Sheldon Mayer, were *Movie Comics* and *All-American Comics*. Both appeared early the following year, with cover dates of April, 1939. Before Gaines moved on a few years later to found EC, his All-American Comics, Inc. division had turned out over a dozen titles, offering newsstand habitues everything from a star-spangled superwoman to funny book adaptions of both Old and New Testaments.

Even though Gaines' titles usually bore the DC symbol, they never looked exactly like the other DCs. *All-American*, mixing new material with reprints initially, was closer to *Popular* and *The Funnies* than to *Action* and *Detective*. *Movie* resembled nothing seen before or since. The later titles—*Flash*, *All Star*, *Sensation*, etc.—showed the Sheldon Mayer touch. For one thing, Mayer hired some uncommon artists to work for him. Newspaper veterans such as Ed Wheelan and George Storm. Innovative young men like Irwin Hasen, Alex Toth and Joe Kubert. Nonpareils such as Joe Gallagher, Frank Harry and Louis Ferstadt. He also drew for some of his magazines himself.

While *All-American* featured some original material, the new magazine contained not a single superhero in the cast and relied on newspaper reprints to fill out its pages. Of the several characters shown on the bright yellow cover only Mayer's Scribbly was not a newspaper recruit and the blurb began by announcing—"The only comic monthly with all your old favorites: Mutt & Jeff, Ben Webster, Tippie, Reglar Fellers, Skippy..." Mayer once told me that Gaines, despite being instrumental in the emergence of Superman, didn't think the public would be interested in anymore costumed good guys. Among the original features in the early issues were *Red, White and Blue*, about a spysmashing trio consisting of a soldier, a sailor and a marine; *Hop Harrigan*, Jon. L. Blummer's boy aviator strip that became one of DC's more successful 1940s properties; and *Adventures into the Unknown*, adaptations of the juvenile SF novels of Carl H. Claudy. About the closest thing to a superhero in the first year was Ultra-Man, a futuristic adventure that commenced in 8 (November 1939). Set in the United States of North America in the year 2239 and starring a heroic chap in red tunic,

green shorts and eagle-crested metal helmet, the strip was written and drawn by Blummer under the penname Don Shelby. Despite the fact that Don Shelby is an anagram for By Sheldon, Mayer swears he provided no creative input for the shortlived Ultra-Man.

Succumbing to superhero fever in the summer of 1940, All-American introduced the Green Lantern in its sixteenth issue. There he was on the cover, as drawn by Sheldon Moldoff, all decked out in his red and green costume and charging along a girder at a tommygun-wielding thug. That was just about the only glimpse of his costume you got that issue. The eight page origin story by Mart Nodell and Bill Finger doesn't get around to showing GL in his trick suit until the final panel.

Nodell, who told me he was about twenty five at the time, had walked into the All-American offices down on Lafayette Street with an idea for a new character. Mayer was not exactly overwhelmed. "Nodell's drawing was crude," he's said. "What he did have, crude as he was apt to be in his drawing, was an effective first page. He had taken the lead from the Superman motif and applied the Aladdin to that. I don't know if he included the ring, but he did have the hero with the magical lantern. I didn't want to take it. I thought, what the hell, this is the direction we're already going in and Nodell didn't seem good enough to handle the feature. And yet he *had* walked in with the idea. I wasn't going to use Green Lantern and do it with somebody else. So Bill Finger and I fleshed out the concept....As for Nodell, he made an intense effort to improve."

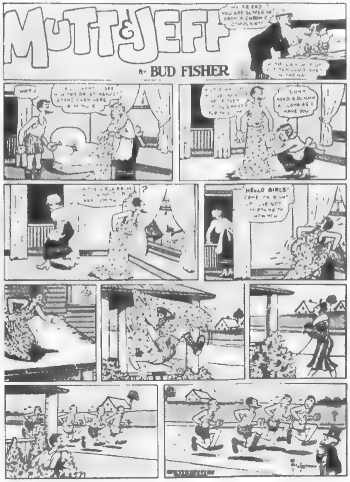
More than one account of the creation of GL mentions Bill Finger's suggestion that his alter ego be named Alan Ladd, a switch on Aladdin. "This was in 1940, exactly two years before newcomer Alan Ladd would star in *This Gun For Hire*," explains Dennis O'Neil in *Secret Origins of the Super DC Heroes*, implying that Ladd had never been seen or heard of prior to achieving star status in Paramount's adaption of the Graham Greene novel. Actually, though, he had appeared in over two dozen movies prior to that and about half of them were made before the advent of Green Lantern. Finger, however, can be forgiven for assuming Ladd didn't come along until he'd discarded the name in favor of Alan Scott. Most of Ladd's early roles—in such films as *Pigskin Parade* (1936), *Souls At Sea* (1937), *The Goldwyn Follies* (1938) and *Beast of Berlin* (1939)—were small, sometimes

not even accompanied by a screen credit. Interestingly enough Ladd also had a semi-lead in a Universal serial, released early in 1941, about a similarly named masked man—*The Green Hornet*. And, despite its sounding like that of the fellow with the famous lamp, Alan Ladd was his real name.

The virtually unsung hero of the Green Lantern saga was a diminutive, New York-born young cartoonist named Irwin Hasen. A veteran of the Chesler and Jacquet shops, he began ghosting GL stories with issue 26 (May 1941). Hasen had a loose, cartoony style, with Caniff touches in his inking, and a highly individual way of laying out action. Never one of the stars of the Golden Age, Hasen was nevertheless a very effective artist and was much admired by some of his peers. Alex Toth got his first interviews with Mayer because of a fan letter he wrote about Hasen while still a teenager. "Shelly admitted he'd taken all that time with me because not too many others shared his appreciation of, and admiration for Irwin Hasen's originality, style, simplicity, snap and storytelling potential."

Hasen drew nearly all the GL adventures through *All-American* 51 (July 1943), with some help from inkers such as Chester Kozlak. Hasen did the story in 27 (June 1941) that introduced Green Lantern's unorthodox sidekick, cabdriver Doiby Dickles. The pudgy Doiby was tough and excitable—"When a guy smashes me doiby, dat's de last straw!"—and Mayer has said he was inspired by the plump half of the immensely popular 1940s movie comedy team of Abbott & Costello. The Green Lantern tales were some of the best written of the Golden Age, with scripts initially by Finger and then by such SF writers as Henry Kuttner and Alfred Bester (who invented Solomon Grundy). The plots mixed mystery, fantasy and comedy. The postwar GL, with art by Paul Reinman, the returned Hasen and Toth, went in more for combating colorful villains—Sportsmaster and the lady known as Harlequin—and he replaced Doiby with a wonder dog. He made his last appearance in 102 (October 1948) and after that the magazine, giving in to a new trend, became *All-American Western*.

Once *All-American* had opened its door to Green Lantern, other costumed crimefighters and superheroes began to move in. The Atom arrived in 19 (October 1940), followed by Dr. Mid-nite in 25 (April 1941) and Sargon the Sorcerer in 26 (May 1941). The cast remained stable for the next several

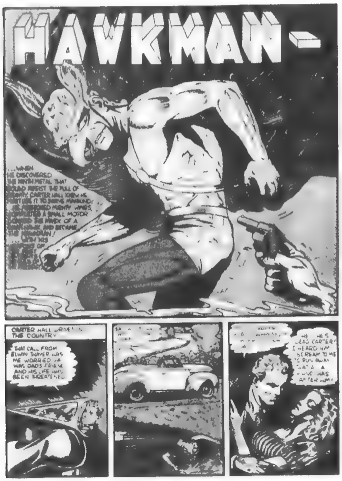


years. Even Mutt & Jeff, long one of Gaines' favorites, hung around for almost the entire life of the magazine.

Movie Comics, which started at the same time as *All-American*, was a very unusual and very unsuccessful magazine. Even today, when you ask Mayer about it, he hastens to explain that the idea wasn't his. The engraving firm Gaines dealt with came up with the notion of doing *fumetti* versions of motion pictures and sold it to Gaines. Then Mayer was stuck with trying to make the gimmick work. The New York offices of the various movie studios provided scripts and stills. The photos, of which there were never enough, were pasted on pages and had balloons and captions added. This resulted in fuzzy, poorly colored and impossibly truncated versions of such films as *Gunga Din*, *Stage Coach*, *Four Feathers*, *Man in the Iron Msak*, *Chumps at Oxford* and a couple of Gene Autry oaters. In addition to singing cowboy epics, *Movie* also attempted to adapt a Bing Crosby flick and *The Mikado*. The only bright spots were some filler pages by Harry Lampert and two-color reprints of Ed Wheelan *Minute Movie* strips from the early Thirties. The magazine died after six issues. Mayer says he'd have been much happier doing out and drawn adaptions of the films.

By the time Gaines got around to planning his next title, late in 1939, things were changing and the kids who bought comic books were quite obviously willing to support more than one superhero. The enterprising Victor Fox, for example, had jumped into the arena early in the year with *Wonderworld Comics* and followed that with *Mystery Men* and *Fantastic*, all crowded with costumed heroes such as the Blue Beetle, the Green Mask, the Flame and Samson. Fox claimed a combined circulation of one million copies per month for his trio of titles. The Centaur folks introduced *Amazing Man Comics* in the summer of 1939, Timely brought out *Marvel Mystery* in the fall. Clearly a trend was developing. So when Gaines' *Flash Comics* 1 (January 1940) appeared it contained not one but two superheroes plus a masked avenger and, for good measure, a comedy character with magic powers. Gaines didn't completely shake his fondness for newspaper strips and issues 2 through 11 also featured reprints of Paul Jepson's *Rod Rian of the Sky Police*.

Edited by Mayer, much of *Flash* was written by Gardner Fox, who created some of his most durable characters for the magazine. "I wrote everything except Johnny Thunder and the Whip,"


HAWKMAN
CLIFF CORNWALL
Special Agent
MODERN WARFARE IS A HIGHLY SCIENTIFIC AND MECHANIZED ART. IT IS IN THE FACTORIES AND LABORATORIES OF THE VARIOUS NATIONS THAT A WAR IS WON OR LOST... DEPENDING UPON HOW MANY TANKS, MACHINE-GUNS, ANTI-AIRCRAFT AND LONG-RANGE GUNS THAT NATION HAS, AND THE QUALITY. THE UNITED STATES, THE GREATEST INDUSTRIAL NATION IN THE WORLD...
IN ACCORDANCE WITH AMERICA'S PREPAREDNESS PROGRAM, HUGE, SMELLS ARE TURNED OUT IN LARGE QUANTITIES BY GREAT FACTORIES AND ARSENALS...
AIRPLANE FACTORIES RACE AT TOP SPEED...
NAVAL YARDS HURRY CONSTRUCTION...
IN WASHINGTON D.C. THE FEAR OF SPIES AND SABOTAGE IS GREAT...
CLIFF ENTERS TO MEET SAMUEL BURNS, WEALTHY MAGNATE
I'VE HEARD OF YOU, CORNWALL. I HOPE YOU CAN DELIVER THE GOODS
I'LL DO MY BEST, SIR. WHEN DO I BEGIN?
COME OUT TO MY PLANT WITH ME. WE'LL LOOK THE PLACE OVER AND DECIDE WHERE THE LEAK IS
GOOD. LET'S GO AT ONCE!
HELLO LIZ. THIS IS MR BURNS. BURNS, SAY'S VALLIERE. MY COMMUNICH DOLLY'S IN HARRY'S FASHION CASE
WHY NOT COME ALONG THEN? SAY A WOMAN'S INTUITION IS GREAT AT THINGS
I'D LOVE TO

Fox has explained, "both were by a fellow who lived up in Maine, John Wentworth, and the Ed Wheelan strip...I did the Flash and Hawkman, even Cliff Cornwall." The star of the magazine was the Flash, "the man who moves with the speed of light." In the origin story, scripted by Fox and drawn by Lampert, we learn that college science student Jay Garrick came by his incredible ability after accidently inhaling "the deadly fumes of the gas elements of 'heavy water.' " The first thing he does with his new swiftness is, perhaps inspired by Harold Lloyd silent comedies like *The Freshman*, join the football team to impress his blonde girlfriend Joan Williams. Unlike less bright comic book ladies, Joan is fully aware that Garrick is also the Flash. She's not above, on occasion, asking him to do a favor for her while in his superhero mode.

Lampert left the feature after the second issue, replaced by Everett E. Hibbard. In his early thirties, Hibbard had been a commercial artist and much admired the work of Milton Caniff and Noel Sickles. Although he didn't draw in the flamboyant style of a Jack Kirby, he did an effective job. He had a good design sense and his covers were almost always impressive. "He understood what I was after," Mayer says of him, "and accompanied me." Gradually Gardner Fox moved away from completely straight continuities and began to indulge in a certain amount of kidding and satire with the Flash. Hal Sharp ghosted some of the artwork in the early Forties, as did the inimitable Louis Ferstadt. A somewhat radical fellow, trained as a fine artist, Ferstadt's work resembled WPA murals and his splash panels often had a Picasso-like look. The rest of his pages were filled with strange and stunted people, places and things.

The Hawkman was more serious and considerably more mystical. Fox relied on the *Weird Tales* side of his talent for many of the stories. Dennis Neville drew the first three stories and Sheldon Moldoff, at his most ambitious, took over thereafter. Rounding out the early crew were the Whip, a Zorro impersonator; Cliff Cornwall, a daredevil secret agent; Johnny Thunder, a nitwit who was looked after by a somewhat snide thunderbolt. Ed Wheelan drew *Flash Picture Novelets*, which eventually became *Minute Movies*, a comic book rendition of his once famous newspaper strip.

The final Gaines-Mayer monthly, which brought the overall DC list of monthlies to eight, was *Sensation*. The first issue bore a January 1942 cover

COME ON, WE'RE GOING VISITING!
DON'T TELL ME I KNOW - THE TOY SHOP
THEY SOON ARRIVE AT THE TOY SHOP...
YOU WAIT OUT HERE, CLIFF. THERE MAY BE TROUBLE AND I DON'T WANT YOU TO GET HURT!
PRETTY INGENIOUS THAT TELESCOPE FROCKED OFF THE WINDOW OF THE U.S. ARMAMENT PLANT! YOU WATCH THE MAN MAKE THE WEAPONS PHOTOGRAPH THEM BY A-D OF THAT POWERFUL TELESCOPE AND WE'LL HAVE TOP-
IF YOU TAKE ONE STEP... I BLOW THE ENTIRE BUILDING TO PIECES! THERE'S ONE A YOU OF BOMBS HIDDEN UNDER THIS PLACE. TO GUARD AGAINST ANY SECRET SPIES. ONCE I KNOW YOU'RE COMPLETE, WE BOTH DIE - AND OUR SECRET DIES WITH YOU!
LIFTING HIS HANDS CLIFF PLACES HIS REVOLVER BUTT SO THAT THE SUNLIGHT WILL STRIKE IT - AND TEMPORARILY BLIND THE SPY!
OKAY, I GUESS I YOU'VE GOT - HEY, WHAT TH'...
OH NO! YOU KNOW IT!
CLIFF REACHES BEHIND HIM - HIS FINGERS CLOSE OVER THE METAL FORM OF A TOY HORSE...
AS P. WAS THE HEAVY OBJECT
STRING ONE AND HE'S OUT!
ACTING INSTANTLY CLIFF SMASHES OUT...
YOU WERE WELL PREPARED BUT LITTLE OLD MR. SUN SOON HELPED ME OUT!
GET A MOVE ON - AND IF YOU TWIST SIGN OF TWICE-BY I'LL BLAST YOU OUT OF FOUR SMOKE-LEAVE!
THE SPIES ARE TURNED OVER TO THE F.B.I.
THAT WAS MARVELOUS WORK, CLIFF - SIMPLY MARVELOUS!
IMAGINE THOSE SPIES USING A TELESCOPE TO WATCH MY MEN!
NOT TO KEEP YOU MISCHIEF WHILE ARRANGE YOU YOUR HANDS!
THERE'S A SECOND STORY HERE - AND TEN TO ONE IT'S THE PLACE WHERE THEY MAKE THEIR WAR TOYS!
I WAS RIGHT! ALL RIGHT YOU GET YOUR HANDS UP
WHILE MEN LIKE YOU GUARD OUR INDUSTRIES, WE'VE NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF!
SHUCKS, I DIDN'T DO SO MUCH - AFTER ALL IT WAS LYS WHO GAVE ME THE IDEA!
ME, CLIFF?
SURE IT YOU WASN'T WANTED THAT DOLL MAKER HAVE GONE INTO THE TOY BUSINESS! NOW I'LL HAVE TO GO IN THERE AND TELL THE MAN HOW TO MAKE TOYS FOR GERMANY! TO HECK WITH THAT - I'LL ADDRESS ON THE MAIL!
BUT YOU DID ALL THE WORK, CLIFF! AND YOU HAD SO MUCH FUN ABOUT IT. THAT'S WHAT I LIKE!
NEXT MONTH ANOTHER CLIFF CORNWALL IN FLASH COMICS!

late and showcased Wonder Woman, who'd been introduced in *All Star Comics* shortly before. The field of lady costumed crimefighters was not a crowded one in the early years of the Golden Age. There were Lady Luck, Miss Victory, Black Cat, Phantom Lady and a few others. But there was no female equivalent to Superman. Gaines set out to remedy that and the result was Wonder Woman. Bizarrely written and illustrated in a style that harkened back to the art nouveau era, the feature nonetheless became one of the most impressive successes DC ever had. That this twofisted amazon, who went around in what looked like a starspangled foundation garment, would join Superman and Batman is one of the enigmas of comics history.

Dr. William Moulton Marston, a psychologist who'd lectured and taught at Radcliffe, Tufts, Columbia and the New School of Social Research, was nearly fifty when he assumed the penname Charles Moulton and began writing of Wonder Woman. The rationale he put forth makes Marston sound like a pioneering feminist. "Women's strong qualities have become despised because of their weak ones. The obvious remedy is to create a feminine character with all the strength of a superman plus all the allure of a good and beautiful woman." As to whether boys would buy a strongwoman, the doctor asserted, "Give them an alluring woman stronger than themselves to submit to and they'll be *proud* to become her willing slaves!" In retrospect it really seems as though Marston gave himself away with statements like that. The early Wonder Woman yarns are rich with the sort of bondage and submission fantasies that had hitherto been seen only in under-the-counter publications. His were some of the wackiest continuities of the Golden Age—or any age for that matter—and WW offered wartime readers a heady brew of whips, chains and cockeyed mythology. To bring all this to life Harry G. Peter was brought in as artist. Peter had been a professional cartoonist and illustrator since early in the century and he gave the feature a decadent-*Yellow Book* feel. Tradition has it that Peter was a heavy drinker, but he may have been one even before he started drawing Wonder Woman.

The rest of the *Sensation* team was, with the exception of Wildcat, minor league. Little Boy Blue featured a costumed kid gang, Mr. Terrific was just one more fellow in a trick suit and the Gay Ghost, whose name has been bothering DC in recent years, was a mild variation on the Spectre and

SWISH!
FLASH BRAINS TO HELP— AND BOSS MUGSEY'S BRAIN— HERE IS ALSO A CLOWN—
CLAP! CLAP! HA! HA! HO! HO!
FOR MORE EXCITING ADVENTURES OF
THE FLASH!
DON'T MISS THE NEXT ISSUE OF
FLASH COMICS.!!

MLJ's Mr. Justice. Wildcat, drawn by Irwin Hasen and written by Bill Finger, had some of the quality they brought to the Green Lantern and dealt with a boxing champ who donned an animal skin costume to fight crime.

One of Sheldon Mayer's more enduring inventions was *All Star Comics*. Begun as a quarterly, it brought together characters from both the DC and the AA branches of the family. The bright yellow cover of the first issue, showing panels ripped from four of the strips, ws designed by Mayer, who also drew the logo. Issue 3 (Winter 1940) saw the first meeting of the Justice Society of America—with Sandman, the Atom, the Spectre, the Flash, Hawkman, Dr. Fate, the Green Lantern and Hourman attending. In 4, which was the first bi-monthly issue, there was a theme that ran through all the stories. From then on the JSA teamed up each issue, to defend the country against spies, travel to the planets, feed the starving of Europe and defeat such villains as the Brain Wave, the Psycho-Pirate and Degaton. All of the novel-length adventures were the work of the inventive Gardner Fox, with the heroes' regular artist doing individual chapters.

The second issue of *All Star* had included a ballot coupon. The first 1000 to send it in would get a free copy of the next issue. What Sheldon Mayer and the gang in the editorial department at 225 Lafayette Street wanted was your favorite DC characters "in the order in which I would like to see you publish complete books of them like SUPERMAN and BATMAN." A box in 3 promised news of the chosen star in 4 and mentioned "as this issue goes to press, we have already received over 7,700 cards." Finally the announcement came—"THE FLASH WINS!" There was just one small snag, as explained in a statement atributed to Fox and Hibbard. "If we call our quarterly simply 'THE FLASH,' which seems like the natural thing to do, our editors feel that too many of you readers would confuse it with 'Flash Comics,' the *monthly* magazine." What we readers had to do, and quick, was come up with a suitable, non-confusing name. The incentive for swift and inspired thinking was $25.

The name that won was *All-Flash Quarterly* and the first issue, "a fit companion to Superman and Batman," came forth in the summer of 1941. The initial issue recapped the origin and offered "all new, never-before-published episodes." With the next issue Fox began trying something different—"We here present for the first time a complete novel-length story of

HOP HARRIGAN
AMERICA'S ACE OF THE AIRWAYS
JOHN L. BUSHMAN
HIPPITY
HIPPITY W HOT!
Read HOP HARRIGAN IN EVERY ISSUE OF ALL-AMERICAN COMICS
Listen TO HOP'S ADVENTURES 5 DAYS A WEEK ON YOUR LOCAL BLUE NETWORK RADIO STATION

The Flash!" The novel was divided into four chapters and took fifty two pages to unfold.

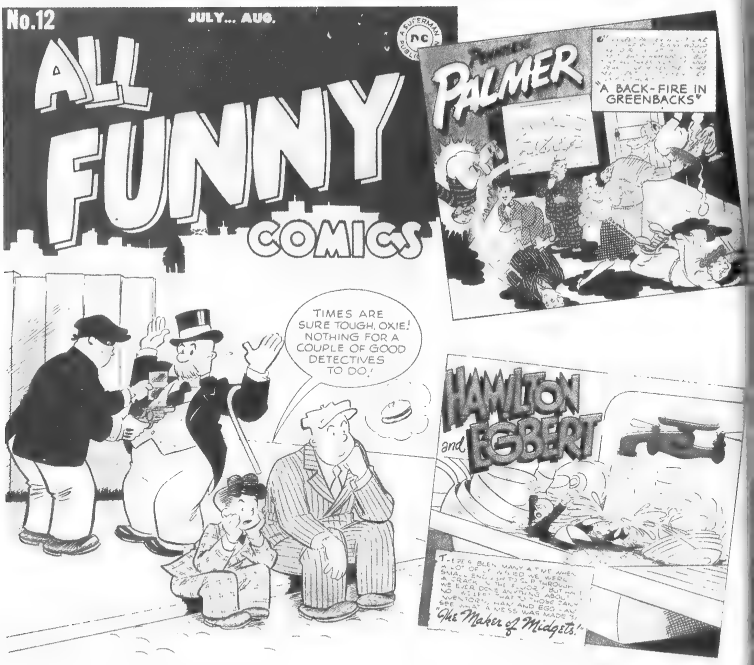
No sooner had Flash resigned from the Justice Society to solo in his own magazine than *All Star* was at it again. This time they wanted to know who should get the next quarterly and who should replace him as an active member of the JSA. The prizes were free issues again and not cash money, but even so "we received over 10,000 replies." The winner was the Green Lantern. The latest election neatly balanced things, giving the Donenfeld-Liebowitz division two hero quarterlies—*Superman, Batman*—and the Gaines division two—*All-Flash* and *Green Lantern*. The new GL magazine debuted in the fall of 1941.

The All-American group started a large economy size comic book late in 1942 with *Comic Cavalcade*—"A Galaxy of America's Greatest Comics!" Featuring, for the most part, brand new material, the 96 page 15¢ quarterly offered characters from *Flash, All-American* and *Sensation*. The stars were Wonder Woman, Green Lantern and the Flash. The backup features fluctuated from issue to issue and included the Ghost Patrol, Wildcat, Hop Harrigan, the Atom and, since almost no GA comic seemed complete without a magician, Sargon the Sorcerer.

An even larger sampler, with the simple and apt title of *The Big All-American Comic Book* came along in 1944. A fat 132 pages, it sold for 25¢ and offered just about all the major characters in the AA stable. This one-shot contains Joe Kubert's very first try at drawing Hawkman and one of the last adventures of Scribbly Mayer ever did.

Like Major Nicholson, M.C. Gaines had an itch to educate as well as entertain. In the major this produced adaptions of the classics in *More Fun* and *New Adventure* and in Gaines the result was *Picture Stories from The Bible*. The first issue appeared in 1942, with art by Don Cameron. Mayer never thought much of the venture and tried to have as little to do with the magazine as possible. Gaines introduced *Picture Stories from The American History* in 1945. By the time *Picture Stories from World History* appeared in 1947, Gaines had parted with DC and started his EC line. Mayer stayed on at DC until 1948 and then stepped down as editor of the AA titles. He wanted to devote more time to his cartooning, but that's another story.

THE FUNNY STUFF


No.12
JULY... AUG.
ALL FUNNY COMICS
PALMER
"A BACK-FIRE IN GREENBACKS"
TIMES ARE SURE TOUGH, OXIE! NOTHING FOR A COUPLE OF GOOD DETECTIVES TO DO.'
HAMILTON and EGBERT
"The Maker of Midgets."

In the first years of the Second World War most of the major comic book publishers, possibly as a reaction to the increasingly grim state of the real world, added out and out funny titles to their lists. Marvel, Fawcett, MLJ and others entered an area that up untill then Whitman-Dell had pretty much had to themselves. 1942 saw Marvel launching both a funny people title, *Joker Comics*, and a funny animal one, *Krazy Komics*. They also converted the faltering *Daring Mystery* into *Comedy Comics*. Fawcett initiated a rabbit into the Marvel Family and introduced Hoppy the Marvel Bunny in *Funny Animals*. MLJ, previously a bastion of bloodshed and Good Girl Art, turned one of their most violent titles into *Top-Notch Laugh* in the summer of 1942. The following year DC brought forth their first all funny title, calling it, aptly enough, *All Funny Comics*.

A quarterly, *All Funny* boasted that its sixty four pages contained "12 Big Laugh Features!" Some of the characters, such as the impecunious private eye Penniless Palmer and the costumed human encyclopedia Genius Jones, had been borrowed from other DC titles. Among the brand new characters were Two-Gun Percy, Hamilton & Egbert and Buzzy. Several of the cartoonists recruited for the humor operation were well beyond draft age. Among the newspaper and magazine veterans, some of whom had been turning out funny stuff since before the First World

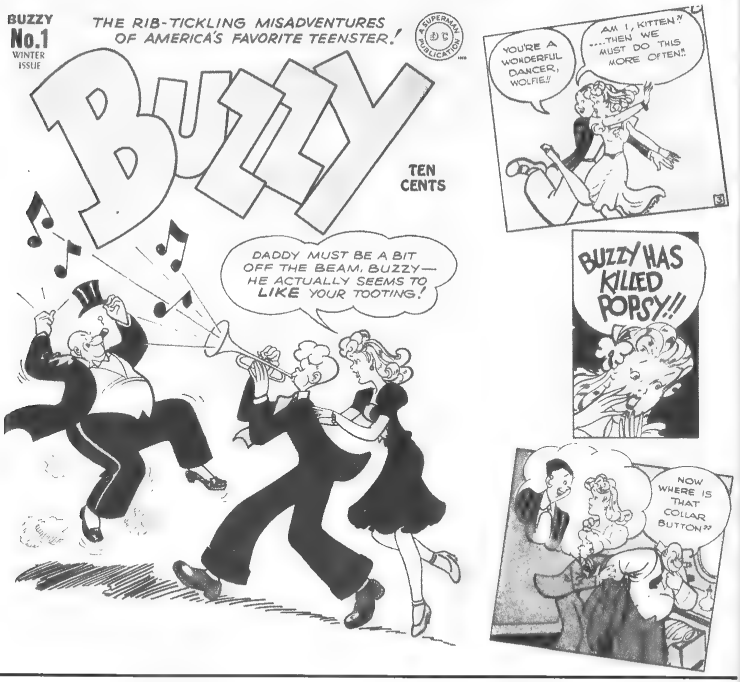
GENIUS JONES
OUR GRAND on GASOLINE!
WAAL MAKE SURE YUH KEEP YORE PROMISE TO HELP!
YESS R. FEIRST THING IN THE MORNIN' I'LL BE THAR TO OPEN THE BANK DOORS FOR YUH!
TWO GUN
PERCY
HEY! HOLD YER HOSSES TWO-GUN! I'M GETTIN' TIRED.
CAN'T WAIT, HORACE! SHERIFF WINKLE'S AT MCGINTY'S AN IT'S MY CHANCE TAGK-M FER THAT JOB AS DEPUTY SHER FF!
IF
THE PHONEY FRONTS!

War, were Tom McNamara, Jack Farr, Jack Callahan, Jimmy Thompson, Ray McGill, Paul Fung and George Storm.

McGill produced Hayfoot Henry, one of the few police procedurals ever written in verse—"I'll take it home and check it for prints. Maybe it'll give me a couple of hints."—and put in many years ghosting the *Blondie* newspaper strip. Paul Fung, Sr. contributed Hamilton & Egbert and an occasional Penniless Palmer. He'd assisted Billy DeBeck on *Barney Google* and drawn a now forgotten strip called *Gus & Gussie*. In the 1930s Fung, who had one of the liveliest bigfoot styles, drew *Dumb Dora* and dozens of advertising strips. Storm, another newspaper vet—*Phil Hardy, Bobby Thatcher*—came up with Buzzy, the surprise star of the magazine.

The younger contributors included Bernard Bailey, original artist on Two-Gun Percy; Henry Boltinoff, who drew the adventures of a team of twin dim-wit detectives named Dover & Clover; Stan Kaye, illuminator of the adventures of Genius Jones.

The AA branch produced, under the editorship of Sheldon Mayer, DC's first funny animal title. *Funny Stuff*, a quarterly, commenced in the summer of 1944. Mayer drew J. Rufus Lion, an animal kingdom version of Major Hoople. The Three Mouseketeers, Blackie Bear and Bulldog Drumhead were also in the troop. One of the more interesting characters was McSnurtle the Turtle, alias the Terrific Whatzit.


BUZZY
No.1
WINTER
ISSUE
THE RIB-TICKLING MISADVENTURES OF AMERICA'S FAVORITE TEENSTER!
A SUPERMAN PUBLICATION
Buzzy
TEN CENTS
DADDY MUST BE A BIT OFF THE BEAM, BUZZY— HE ACTUALLY SEEMS TO LIKE YOUR TOOTING!
YOU'RE A WONDERFUL DANCER, WOLFIE!!
AM I, KITTEN?! ---THEN WE MUST DO THIS MORE OFTEN!
BUZZY HAS KILLED POPSY!!!
NOW WHERE IS THAT COLLAR BUTTON??

This was a parody of the Flash and gave us McSnurtle in a miniature Flash costume, winged helmet and all. Martin Naydell, who drew it, was also drawing the real Flash at the time. The benchmark is 5. This one Mayer drew, cover and contents. "I had such a yen to sit down and draw pictures again," he explained to the readers, "that I drew this whole issue before I could get it out of my system." It was a noble, and funny, effort.

The first DC teenage title was *Buzzy*, which began life as a quarterly in the winter of 1944. Storm's Buzzy didn't seem like any teen his young readers might've known. He wore a suit and tie for instance, and drove around in an ancient auto with wisecracks lettered on its sides. Buzzy was a peabrained fellow who played jive trumpet and was closer in many ways to Harold Teen of a decade earlier than to contemporary youths. It didn't seem to matter, though, and the readers took to the magazine.

From then on funny titles of all sorts proliferated—*Leave It To Binky*, *Scribbly*, *Real Screen*, etc. At one point, in the late 1940s, even once serious adventure titles such as *Leading Comic Cavalcade* and *More Fun* were converted to humor.

Sheldon Mayer: Scribbly

SCRIBBLY AND THE RED TORNADO
BY SHELDON MAYER
LIKE FOR INSTANCE THE TIME WHEN
WHAT'S ALL THE NOISE HUEY?
UNCLE CUTS AN UNCLE MEANWHILE THEY'RE AT IT AGAIN
I JUST ASKED WHEN A MAN YOU AIN'T
ASKED OR SCRIBBLY
THAT AIN'T THE QUESTION!
THE CYCLONE HIDE
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT!
YESSIR AND IT'S WORTH A FORTUNE
BUT PUT THAT DUMB GUG ME WOULDN'T KNOW A MILLION DOLLARS IF HE FELL OVER IT!
HA WHAT'S IT BOTHERS YOU
I KNOW YOU DON'T BUT THAT'S WHAT YOU WERE THINKING ISN'T IT?
OH YOU DO EH?
HOLY COW! I DON'T SAY IT!
A MIND-READIN' MAN WHO RENTS TAKE YOLKS MONEY!
WHAT'RE YOU LOOKIN' AT RUBBERNECK?
WORK?
HEY!
SAY
I'LL MAKE YOU A NICE OFFER
I'LL GIVE YOU HALF OF WHAT YOU GOT AGAINST ALL THAT IF YOU HAND ALL INTO ME FOR MOCHING YOU LIKE!
HE SAID HE AIN'T INTERESTED!
AH COME ON NOW YOU DON'T MEAN THAT
I'LL MAKE IT A FIFTY
AW FORGET IT
UHF!
WELL I GOT FIFTY-FOUR BUCKS IN CASH ANY WATCHA
HA-THAT'S NOT MUCH- BUT I THINK I CAN LET YOU HAVE SAY- A TEN DOLLAR NOTE THAT MAKE SIXTY-FOUR
SOLD-HEY SCRIB- WE GOT A TERRIFIC PROPERTY HERE FOR YOUR BOSS'S PAPER!
NOPE! NO DEAL! WE GOTTA KEEP IT TO OURSELVES!
I KNOW YOU WON'T BELIEVE ME BUT I'LL TELL YOU ONE OF THESE DAYS
KEEP IT A SECRET!
OH OKAY- OKAY- I'M GOIN' DOWN FOR A WALK

The versatile Sheldon Mayer contributed to the very first DC comic book back in the middle Thirties and is still turning out stuff for that outfit. Besides creating such characters as Doodles Duck, J. Rufus Lion and the immortal Sugar & Spike, he edited many of DC's most successful titles. These included *All-American*, *Flash* and *All Star*. Rather than try to squeeze all his accomplishments into one article or waiting until we get around to doing an all S.M. issue, we've decided to concentrate on our favorite funny feature of his from the Golden Age.

While the majority of boys growing up in the late 1930s and early 1940s no doubt wanted to be stunt pilots, baseball stars, movie cowboys and swing musicians when they reached the adult state, there must have been a small multitude who yearned to be professional cartoonists. Several comic books of the period acknowledged this dedicated minority. *Tip Top Comics* provided two pages each issue where amateurs, after competing with the frenzied enthusiasm of gladiators, might see their work in print. Other magazines offered cartooning tips and drawing lessons and in *Flash Comics* veteran newspaper artist Ed Wheelan handed out advice at the end of each month's *Minute Movies*—"Your supplies should include some number 290 and number 170 Gillott penpoints...Above all, try to do some sketching each day."

But best of all there was Scribbly. Scribbly, the boy cartoonist who began his career before a single superhero had trod a funny book page and who survived longer than many of those who came along in the wake of Superman. When he created him Mayer was nineteen and still a boy cartoonist himself. The feature began in the second issue of *The Funnies* (dated November, 1936). The magazine, along with *Popular Comics* and later *The Comics*, was a 64 page compilation of newspaper strip reprints that M.C.Gaines was producing to cash in on the just commencing comic book boom. Listed as Dell publications, all the magazines were put together in the offices of the McClure Syndicate, whose color presses Gaines was utilizing. "I went to work for M.C.Gaines in January of 1936," Mayer recalls. "I had been up to see him the previous summer and half a year later he gave me a call and offered me a few days of pasteup work. I started pasting up newspaper strips in comic book format."

TWO MINUTES LATER -
HELLO MORNING PLANET! LISTEN I GOT A SCOOP FOR YA - -
TELEPHONE
AND SO - THE NEXT DAY IN A NOT TOO CLASSY FLAT ON THE WRONG SIDE OF TOWN!
HEY - HERE'S A LITTLE ITEM - SOME GUY INVENTED A MIND-READIN' MACHINE - HA - WHAT'LL THEY THINK UP NEXT?
SAY - A GUY COULD CLEAN UP IN POKER WITH ONE OF THEM THINGS! TELL ME MORE LOUIE!
AND AT THE SAME TIME IN A LABORATORY OF A FAMOUS COLLEGE
MY WORD ZACHARY! THIS CHAP SEEMS TO HAVE STUMBLED ON THE VERY THING WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON FOR YEARS!
HA AMAZING - IF TRUE - IT MIGHT NOT HURT TO HAVE A CHAT WITH THE FELLOW!
AND BACK AT THE HUNKELS - !
YOU WITH YOUR BIG MOUTH - IF YOU DIDN'T TALK HOW DID THIS ITEM GET IN THE PAPER? HUH?
OH SHUT UP A LITTLE PUBLICITY NEVER HURT NOBODY!
RING RING
WILL YOU TWO DUMBBELLS SHUT UP FOR A MINUTE? I ALMOST DIDN'T HEAR TH DOORBELL!
AWR -
HOWDO! IS THIS TH HUNKEL RESIDENCE? I'M PROFESSOR SMITH AN THIS GUY HERE IS PROFESSOR JONES WE'D LIKE TO SEE THAT THERE EXPERIMENT ON!
HUH?
OH COME RIGHT IN GENTS!

His *Scribbly* pages in *The Funnies* were laid out like Sunday pages, each with its own logo. Mayer did this so his upstart filler could rub shoulders undetected with the real Sunday funnies being reprinted.

"Scribbly was a thing I dreamed up during my lunch hour one day in a noisy cafeteria," Mayer has said. "I followed the old rule of writing only about what you know. What was more natural than writing about the adventures of a boy cartoonist? The strip laid on Gaines' desk for months until George Baker, promotion manager and art director for the McClure Syndicate, finally persuaded him to read it. Max wasn't interested in my being a cartoonist. We had a publishing business that was going like crazy, and he didn't want me distracted from my editorial duties. He finally bought Scribbly, and became a fan of the strip. He used to read it and laugh every time. He never said anything, but laughed every time." Mayer had dreamed of being a professional cartoonist for as long as he could remember, and he wasn't going to content himself with the recycling of other people's strips. Scribbly was his bid to break out of gofer ranks, and it was a successful one.

The feature was drawn in a style that was appealing, exuberant and, you might say, scribbly. The Scribbly saga, as it unfolded in the bright, crowded pages of *The Funnies*, dealt with Scribbly Jibbet, who was young, diminutive, bespectacled and possessed of a head of hair like an untidy haystack. He was intent on breaking free of the bonds put upon him by home, school and contemporaries and entering into that charmed world of newspaper cartooning. Mayer assured me the strip is a blend of autobiography and fantasy and that some of the truest seeming elements are the most unreal. At any rate, the pages mixed lower middle class apartment life with wacky excursions into the worlds of newspaper publishing, radio and even Hollywood. The urban area Scribbly inhabits is a somewhat sanitized version of the one Mayer grew up in. "East Harlem...was a rough, tough neighborhood in those days. Kids began to think about what they were going to do for a living from the day they were born, because everybody wanted to get out of there as soon as possible. You had only three choices—you could do what your father did (usually menial work), or you could run errands for the hoods that the area was full of and work

HEY HERMAN! SHOW THESE GUYS YER MIND READIN CONTRAPTION!
NO! IT DOESN'T WORK SO GOOD ANY MORE!
OF COURSE IT WON'T WORK IF YOU DON'T HOLD YER MODEST! HEAD STILL!
NO! GIMME THAT YOU DIMWIT!
IT'S REALLY REMARKABLE GENTS—ALL YA DO IS HOLD THAT WIRE AN THINK! AN WHATEVER'S ON YER MIND COMES OUTA THAT HORN!
NO IT DOESN'T! HE'S LYIN! THE THING'S A FLOP! IT DOESN'T WORK!
IF IT DIDN'T WORK YOU WOULDN'T BE SO ANXIOUS TO HIDE IT! HAND IT OVER!
HUH?
HEY! WHAT'S GOIN ON OUT THERE? OH! OH! THAT GUY'S GOT A GUN! I GUESS I BETTER PULL A RED TORNADO! PULL IT QUICK!

your way up in the mobs, or you could learn a skill on your own that could be turned into honest money. Nobody considered college because it was unreachable . . . impossible."

The rougher elements of Mayer's boyhood milieu never intruded into the strip. Scribbly had a kind but not always understanding mother—"Famous? Ha ha—wait till you're making a hundred dollars a week—then maybe I'll buy you a real desk."—a bratty little brother and no visible father. The impish brother, based on Mayer's own younger sibling, inspires Scribbly to create what will be his most famous cartoon feature, *Why Big Brothers Leave Home* (later the Brothers will change to Brudders). With the help of pro artist Ving Parker, inspired by Mayer's mentor Ving Fuller ("By the time I was fourteen, the family had moved to Washington Heights; I was hanging around and pestering a cartoonist named Ving Fuller who had his home and studio in the neighborhood . . . I worked as his assistant for awhile."), Scribbly gets his panel into *The Daily Bugle*. He also meets celebrated cartoonists like Milt Gross and Harry Hershfield and he falls in love with Daphne Dimples of his high school paper. Eventually in *The Funnies* the restless Mayer took his boy cartoonist further afield, involving him in Hollywood activities. Scribbly stopped appearing in *The Funnies* early in 1939 and by that time Mayer was occupied elsewhere.

He and Gaines had started yet another string of comic books, the first of which was *All-American* and Scribbly found a home there. The early Scribbly pages are still laid out like Sundays, with *Why Big Brudders Leave Home* as a topper. In *All-American* 3 Scribbly meets for the first time the warmhearted and rowdy Hunkel family, presided over by the warmhearted and rowdy Ma Hunkel. His entrance into this melange is by way of Huey Hunkel, a boy his own age who wants to be a writer. Mayer once told me that this part of the saga is autobiographical. There really was a Ma Hunkel and in real life he had a room in her house which he used as a studio. Through the efforts of the Hunkel clan Scribbly again gets a newspaper job, this time as the boy cartoonist on *The Daily Dispatch*, drawing his *Big Brudders* panel. His editor is thin and moustached, unlike M.C. Gaines, but he seems to share his fondness for yelling and losing his temper. For the first year and a half of his *All-*

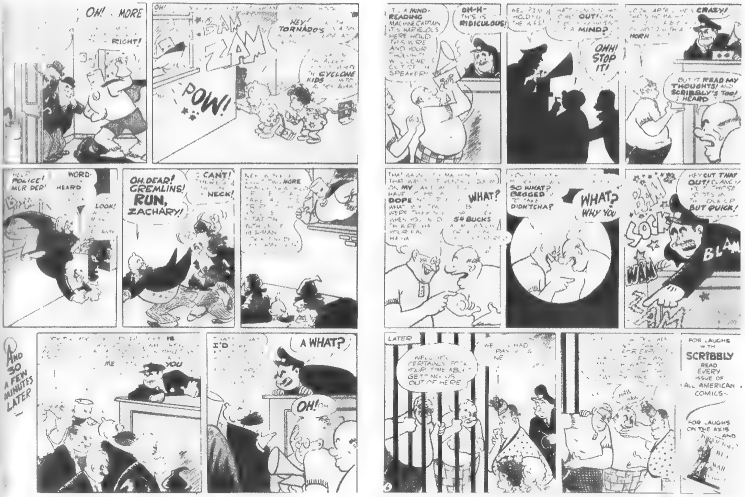
C'MON, BAGGY PANTS— LET'S HAVE TH' MACHINE!
NO-O IT DOESN'T WORK-- OH-H H
C'MON!
DON'T BE IN SUCH A HURRY!
YOU REALLY SHOULD STAY FOR TEA!
CLUNK
AND AT THIS PRECISE MOMENT— TWO MORE VISITORS FOR THE HUNKELS—
4
I BELIEVE THIS IS THE PLACE—
THIS CHAP MUST BE VERY BRILLIANT. I CAN'T WAIT TO TALK TO HIM!
R-RING! R-RING!
COME IN!
POW!

American existence Scribbly goes along being a boy cartoonist and enjoying various cockeyed adventures.

In the real world meanwhile, Mayer was knee deep in supermen—Green Lantern, The Flash, Hawkman, etc. He needed a place to comment on some of the sillier aspects of the super life and what better place than his own Scribbly pages? Thus the Red Tornado was born. Anticipating the monumental creation of William Moulton Marston, possibly even influencing it, Mayer chose a woman to be his costumed avenger. He made the formidable Ma Hunkel into the even more formidable Red Tornado. Actually, the public never knows the true sex of the tornado. They only know that this bulky figure in the red flannels, bedroom slippers, cape and inverted stew pot can be counted on to tackle all sorts of criminals from the biggest to the smallest. Ma Hunkel first donned the stew pot in *All-American* 20 (November, 1940), a mere four issues after Alan Scott had his momentous run-in with that magic lantern. What inspires her to embark on her caped crusade is the kidnapping of Scribbly's brother and her little daughter Sisty. The police seem unable to get the kids back and so Ma takes a hand.

She gets the notion after Scribbly and Huey tell her about the Green Lantern. "The Green Lantern? Who th' heck is he?" is her initial response. "Well, he's a guy who just waits for somethin' like this to happen, an' then he puts on this mysterious costume so nobody'd recognize him," explains Scribbly, "An' . . ." "An' ZINGO," adds Huey, "he comes to the rescue!" Three scant pages later Ma, clad in her Red Tornado costume, is barging into the hideout of gambling czar Torponi to rescue the kids from the kidnappers and the now beleaguered kidnappers from the kids.

By issue 23 Scribbly is sharing billing with the Tornado and in 24 Dinky and Sisty join the act as The Cyclone Kids. A few more issues and the Red Tornado's name has swollen to twice the size of the boy cartoonist's in the title. Mayer is obviously enjoying himself with all this, with kidding the whole dual identity mystique and with showing how someone would fare in the real world attempting to do good as a masked marvel. Ma Hunkel's celebrity was such that on one occassion, in *All-Star* 3, she sat in with the prestigious and sobersided Justice Society of America. "I'm tellin' ya," the Tornado complains to the Flash, Hour Man and the



Sandman, "I've never been the same since I started battlin' crime in this crazy costume!!" Ma Hunkel continued to slip into the crazy costume for the rest of Scribbly's stay in *All-American*. And right up to the last appearance in issue 59 (July, 1944) Scrib never quite tumbled to the fact that Ma and the kids were actually the crimestopping trio.

In that final bow the characters are not themselves. Mayer begins the story by explaining that usually the same old thing goes on issue after issue. "Sometimes it's funny—sometimes it isn't—anyhow I'm getting a little tired of it. Just this once I'm gonna have some fun! Frinstance let's see what would happen if instead of people we draw these characters as animals . . ." Scribbly and his little brother become a horse and a pony respectively, Ma and Sisty a hen and a chick. As the mother hen version of the Tornado Ma wears a special stew pot designed to accomodate her newly acquired beak. At the end of the four pages Mayer says, Well, now that's off my chest you'll find Scribbly and the gang just like always in every issue . . ." This proved to be untrue. Mayer had decided his editorial responsibilities were such that he had to drop out of cartooning for a spell. He'd been turning the Scribbly stuff out on weekends and he was getting a little tired. So the whole screwball saga shut down.

Scribbly came back to life once more during the late 1940s. Superheroes were flopping all around, funny animals and zany teenagers were in vogue. Mayer was much more enthusiastic about his teenage creation Binky, but was persuaded to revive his boy cartoonist, this time in a bimonthly of his own. Once more Scrib, still wearing the sincere black suit and badly knotted tie of a Depression youth, got a job on *The Daily Bugle*. He draws a different feature, works for a different yelling, desk-pounding boss. Mayer's heart didn't seem to be in it, sales were apparently not impressive. Scribbly retired for good and all before the Fifties had much progressed.

THE CREATORS

Golden Age Memories

In this section we offer you some oral history, letting several artists who worked for DC during the 1930s and 1940s speak for themselves. all the material is taken from recent interviews conducted specially for this issue by me or Jerry DeFuccio.

It was in the 1930s that John Lehti—who signed himself Jack Lehti back then—went to work for DC. After service in World War II he was art director on the innovative and short-lived *Picture News Comics*. Graduating to newspaper strips, Lehti did *Tommy of the Big Top* for King Features and then drew the *Tales of the Great Book* Sunday page for seventeen years. In his seventies and still active, he draws a Bible panel that he and a partner syndicate.

JOHN LEHTI: I forget who it was who said go up there to DC if you want some work. I had been doing drybrush stuff and covers for the pulps. And that market was getting very, very thin, and so was I. I needed some money and that's how I started. The price in comics in those days was five bucks a page and you wrote the story, too, and you lettered it—the works. I started working for Vince Sullivan and then continued with Whit Ellsworth. *O'Malley of the Red Coat Patrol* (in *More Fun*) was the first thing I did. Although after the first month or so I was doing *O'Malley*, *Steve Conrad*(in *Adventure*), *Cotton Carver* (in *Adventure*) and the *Crimson Avenger* (in *Detective*). I wrote them, too—did everything.

I think in about a year I got up to eight or ten bucks a page, something like that. There weren't any guidelines as to how to handle the characters. Although the Crimson Avenger, when I took it over, he had a cape and a gasgun and they told me, you know, make him a union suit hero. So I did that. At the time I never had to show pencils—they just accepted anything I did.

I was influenced by Alex Raymond. Well, I was a good friend of Alex. He gave me a lot of tips, and later was helpful to me when I did my first newspaper strip, *Tommy of the Big Top*. Whit Ellsworth was the one who got me the entree to King Features in the first place.

During the DC days, I worked at home. Brought my stuff in once a week. And you got paid right away. Right away. I had quite a few acquaintances up there, some close friends. Like Charlie Paris and Creig Flessel. I'd met Creig in Harvey Dunn's class, around 1934. Creig was very, very good.

I was drafted and served four years in the Army. Fought in Italy, France, Holland. Got wounded, got the Bronze Star. Didn't do much artwork in the service. I killed people is what I did.

Picture News was the first thing I worked on when I came out of the Army. Whit Ellsworth knew I was getting out...and in the summer of 1945, when I'd just gotten back from Germany, he said, "Listen, if you're interested, there's a job I can help you get." The thing that caused *Picture News* to fail was they couldn't get distribution. I even had Milt Gross working for me and I think that was about the last stuff he ever did. He did those drawings in the hospital. I used to call him at the hospital in California and talk about what we were going to do.

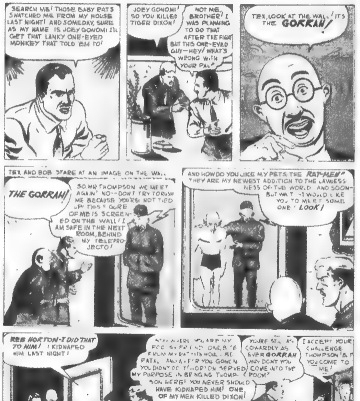
Right then, while I was working with *Picture News* for six months, I had an idea for a circus strip. I did, oh, about two weeks of it and went to King Features on a Friday. And on Monday they called me up and said they wanted to do it.

In his teens when he went to work for DC, Hal Sherman initially drew funny filler pages. After a hiatus, he returned to draw the adventures of the Star Spangled Kid. He left comics in the late 1940s to pursue a career as a gag cartoonist.

HAL SHERMAN: There was a cartoon market out there and I was a cartoonist, so I contacted Whit Ellsworth. I did a lot of filler stuff for him (in *More Fun* and *New*). At the very beginning, even before that, I answered an ad for cartoonist and it was at some hotel in midtown. I got there and I see a little guy in a very small room working on the blood and thunder, adventure stuff. He was looking for an assistant to work with him. That was Joe Shuster, working on Superman. He offered me something like two or three dollars a page. I just couldn't do it.

And since I really wasn't interested in the blood and thunder, I left and went to Hollywood. To try to visualize comedy scripts before they started shooting. I was in Hollywood for awhile and I decided that it was not for me. My wife was homesick and she wanted to get out. So after a couple of months I decided to go back to New York and see if I could get back into the comic book field. I was doing freelance gags, which has always been a precarious field. I did up six sample pages, and I followed the guidelines of the stuff that was being done—Batman and so forth. I sent them to Whit

TEX THOMSON
and THE RETURN OF THE GORRAH!!!
BY
BERNARD BAILY
IN A FAR-OFF CORNER OF THE GLOBE, A STRANGE FIGURE FINDS AN INTERESTING STORY IN ONE OF THE AMERICAN PAPERS WHICH REGULARLY REACH HIM
WELL, SIR, IN VERY INTERESTING VEIN! AND THERE WERE
HERE'S WHAT I'LL PULL AROUND
DAILY NEWS ROMP!
TEX THOMSON CLEANS UP CRIME!
CITY RESTORED TO CITIZENS AFTER RICH, ADVENTUROUS
GHASTS WALK THERE
BONJOUR
OLD FRIEND
SO! TEX THOMSON IS PLAYING HERO AGAIN? NOW I CAN SETTLE AN OLD SCORE AND PERHAPS RULE ONE OF THE RICHEST CITIES IN THE WORLD!


SEARCH ME! THOSE BABY RATS SNATCHED HAL FROM MY HOUSE LAST NIGHT! AND SOMEDAY, SAHIB, AS MY NAME IS JOEY GONDA I'LL GET THAT LANKY ONE-EYED MONKEY THAT TOLD BIG FOOT
JOEY GONDA! SO YOU KILLED TIGER DIXON!
NOT ME, BROTHER! I WAS PLANNING TO DO THAT AFTER THE FIGHT BUT THIS ONE-EYED GUY—HEY! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOUR PAL?
TEX, LOOK AT THE WALL! IT'S THE GORRAH!
TEX AND BOB STARE AT AN IMAGE ON THE WALL...
THE GORRAH!
SO MR THOMPSON, WE MEET AGAIN! NO—DON'T TRY TO RUN WE BROUGHT YOU HERE BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT DEAD YET—THAT'S SURE! OF HIS SCREEN
ED ON THE WALL IS AN EXACT REPLICA OF THE ROOM BEHIND MY TELEVISION OBJECTOR
AND HOW DO YOU LIKE MY PETS, TEX RATHBONE? THEY ARE MY NEAREST ADDITION TO THE LAWLESS ELEMENTS OF THE WORLD! AND SOON—BUT NOW I SHOULD LIKE YOU TO MEET SOMEONE ELSE—LOOK!
REX MORTON—I DID THAT TO HIM! I KIDNAPED HIM LAST NIGHT!
MORTON, WHAT'S WRONG? YOU'RE NOT DEAD! WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE'S PAUL? ALL I GOT TO YOU GONE IN YOU DIDN'T GET COMPLETED MY PURPOSE IN BRINGING THEM. NOW, SIR, YOU NEVER SHALL HAVE KIDNAPED HIM! ONE OF MY MEN KILLED DIXON!
PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB! COMMANDER IN CHIEF BONAPARTE HAS DONE WITH YOU! YOU'RE TO COME TO ME!
EXCEPT! YOU'RE CHALLENGE HAMPERED, THOMPSON, IF YOU COME TO US!

Ellsworth. And I get a letter from Whit telling me, well, first it was Bob Kane with his fat little boys and girls and then he came up with Batman. Now here's Hal Sherman coming up with action. So come on back, we have a script for you.

Jerry Siegel had written the Star Spangled Kid and they wanted me to illustrate it. So I went back and I created the logo and created all the characters, the drawing. And I suggested things to Siegel. About the car, for instance, to make it also a submarine, an airplane and so on. Actually that car was years ahead of the James Bond series.

The reason I left the Star Spangled Kid was I got drafted.

In comics from the middle 1930s, Bernard Bailey has the distinction of having provided the artwork for two of DC's earliest superheroes—Hourman and the Spectre. In the 1940s he also ran a shop that put together comic books for the Prize outfit and many lesser publishers. Among his employees were Gil Kane and Frank Frazetta. He's still active in the publishing area.

BERNARD BAILEY: As far as art training, I was self-taught. And I grew up in New York.

I started off with a magazine called...what was the name of it?...*Wow*.

I went to DC after Donenfeld took over from Nicholson. I was offered a job as editor, but I could make more money drawing so I didn't take it. I must've been eighteen or nineteen.

When I was there at DC Siegel came up with the feature the Spectre. The look of the character I created, the script he wrote. I worked in the office for awhile, then I started working at home. Siegel did the writing on the Spectre the whole time. The thing I created in the Spectre was his sidekick, Percival Popp the Super Cop. An interesting thing is that in many cases the side characters became more popular than the main characters. For the obvious reason that you could do more with them.

At the time, I feel, everything was being geared to Superman, who'd become their big property. At the height of his popularity, in the beginning, I had my Tex Thomson feature in *Action*. I created a cyclops character called the Gorrah. Now, they had a contest at that time. The kids sent in the names of the characters they liked the best and that character ran so close to Superman in popularity that they

made me cut it out. Really.

The Hourman was another one that we had trouble with. When I added the additional characters the Minute Men. That also became a problem, because they were becoming popular and I had to subdue them. We were doing a lot of work and there was only so much you could handle. So you stayed with the one you thought was the better of the characters. And so Hourman I gradually just dropped.

When I was working for DC, I wasn't on salary. It was always page rates.

The other Sherman was Howard. Thirty when he entered comics, he'd been a pulp illustrator for several years prior to that. He drew one of DC's most interesting second team superheroes, Dr. Fate, as well as Slam Bradley. He did the Wyoming Kid for *Western Comics* as well as quite a bit of work for *Real Fact* and *Gang Busters*. Leaving comics in the 1960s, Sherman went into package design for a large toy company. Currently he does freelance work in the design and advertising areas.

HOWARD SHERMAN: I graduated from Pratt Institute in 1931. The Great Depression was in progress. It was most difficult to find art work for money in those days. Finally I received some black and white illustrations from a pulp magazine publisher whose name escapes me, but he published *Real Western, Real Detective* and others. Then I got some work from Jack Schiff, who was an editor at Ned Pines, doing illustrations and oil painted covers for the pulps. Soon after that they switched over to producing comic books and they asked me if I could come up with an idea for a strip. Which I did. It was called *Three Comrades*. I wrote it, lettered it, drew it and colored it. I think I received ten dollars per page. I heard that DC Comics was looking for people, so I contacted Whit Ellsworth, who was the head editor at the time. He gave me the script for *Dr. Fate* to start with, at $12 a page. Then *Slam Bradley*.

I was slower in production than some of the other artists. It took me about ten to fourteen days to pencil and ink six pages.

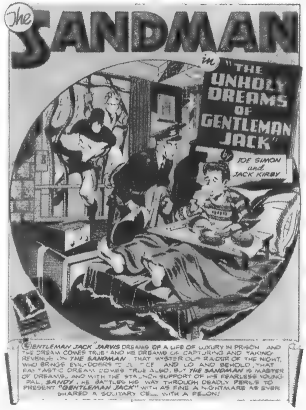
I have no stories to tell about my contact with editors. It seemed to be strictly business with them. The only one who seemed to have any interest in me personally was Whit Ellsworth, and he left for California. I worked for them until 1963, when they became disenchanted with me and I with them.

Simon & Kirby

In the early 1940s, most comic book writers and artists were either anonymous (because they didn't use their real names in signing their stories) or unknown (because no one paid any attention even when they *did* sign their real names). Such was not the case with Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. Beginning with their work on *Blue Bolt*, both names were prominently displayed by the fifth issue. Their move to Timely in 1941 saw more of the "star billing" that was already setting the team apart from the rest of comicdom. But even with as popular a character as Captain America—who would, with Superman and Batman, form one of the "big three" superhero characters of the 1940s—Simon & Kirby must have been chafing at a certain lack of recognition (read: money and creative control) from Timely publisher Martin Goodman. Hardly had *Captain America* hit its stride than the team was negotiating with D.C. Publications—the MGM of the comic book world—to create an entire new stable of characters. S&K's last issue of Cap, 10, was dated January, 1942. By March their work would be appearing exclusively at DC, with their names *above* the titles—an unprecedented concession from a publisher of comic books. (It's done today as a matter of course, for work so inferior that one wonders how the artists and writers have the courage to give their real names at all.)

Of course, it does no good to have your names above the title unless your work delivers. Simon & Kirby's did. Their vivid layouts redefined the conventions of the comic book page, creating new boundaries that suggested *un*bounded possibilities of space and time. (A testament to their impact is demonstrated by the post-S&K *Captain America*, which continued using their style as closely as possible for years after the team's departure.) But artwork was not the only innovation Simon & Kirby brought to the comic books of the 1940s. With *The Young Allies* at Timely, they had introduced the concept of the "kid gang" to the field, by extending the concept of the boy sidekick to its logical conclusion: a whole feature about boy sidekicks. Two of the four features they created for DC in 1942 revolved around kid gangs: The Newsboy Legion (with a little help from The Guardian, a scaled-down Cap) in *Star Spangled Comics* 7 (April 1942) and The Boy Commandos, oddly situated in *Detective Comics* beginning with issue 64 (June 1942). Unlike the Young Allies, these kid gangs had no superpowers. The Newsboy Legion earned the cover spot on *Star Spangled* immediately (with no competition elsewhere in the mag); The Boy Commandos could not wrest control of the cover away from Batman (except for a token slot on 65), but quickly earned their own quarterly title to accompany their pages in *Detective*.

The other features Simon & Kirby brought to DC spun off the Captain America archetype: lean, athletic figures in tight, bright costumes. The Manhunter appeared in *Adventure Comics* 73 (April 1942), while The Sandman debuted in issue 72 of the same magazine. Actually, "debuted" is not the correct term, as both of these characters existed previously as DC characters—at least in name. The Sandman had been around since *Adven-*



GET THIS ONE AWAKE!
AS A MATTER OF FACT I DON'T THINK YOU NEED TO EVERY YOU'RE AT IT!
GENTLEMAN JACK HARRIS MAKES A LAST DESPERATE BID FOR FREEDOM...
AND SO LEAVES HIS TRUSTY FOES TO DEAL WITH THE SANDMAN!
OOF!
AND DREAMS AGAIN THROUGH MANY DREARY HOURS...
Adventure COMICS

ture 40 in 1939, making him one of DC's original superheroes (if a guy wearing a gas-mask and a cape can be considered "super"), while a plain-clothes Manhunter had been introduced over a year before the S&K version. Manhunter was featured on three covers on *Adventure*, 73, 78(a nice teamup with Sandman & Sandy, his kid sidekick) and 79, arguably one of the most powerful covers of the Golden Age, with a giant figure of Manhunter stalking a German submarine. S&K handled his stories for eight issues, 73 through 80, handing the cover art chores over to other less talented artists for 81 through 92. The Sandman probably was the more popular character of the two (deservedly so, since his powers were more original), earning covers on *Adventure* 74-97 (excepting 79), 100 and 102. His stories were handled by Simon & Kirby for the early numbers, again being transferred to others after a time. (S&K often would do a cover and a splash page with a signature, just as they had with much of their work on *Captain America* in 1941.) The Sandman also was invited to participate in four adventures of the Justice Society of America, as recorded in *All Star* 14-17 and 19, along with a *World's Finest* or two.

The recognition that Simon & Kirby received on the covers of their books indicated that the comic book buyers of the day responded to the storytelling techniques and characters invented by the team. It is worth noting that certain *kinds* of stories were favored by S&K, themes that would continue to appear in their work after then left DC to create their own new titles. One of these recurring themes involved mythological characters. The roots for Kirby's Thor in the 60s can be seen in a story such as "The Villain from Valhalla" in *Adventure* 75 (June 1942). Here we have Sandman and Sandy pitted against a bearded, red-haired Thor, complete with magic hammer named Mjolnir. It turns out that this would-be Norseman is "Fairy Tales" Falcon in disguise, a very mortal crook, but you can see what S&K were getting at. Of course, the very premise of the Sandman strip was that the world of dreams could be dealt with as a tangible reality, and many imaginative variations on this theme were played in stories including "Dreams of Doom", "A Dream of Dreams", "Prisoner of His Dreams", "The Man Who Couldn't Sleep" and "The Unholy Dreams of Gentleman Jack". Other figures from mythology popped up in Boy Commandos stories such as "The Siege of Troy"(issue three, which incidentally featured the only centerspread S&K did for DC, despite their standard use of centerspreads in *Captain America* 6-10), "Sleeping Beauty" (issue 2) and "The Knights Wore Khaki". During the 1950s, S&K would attempt to turn their fascination with mythology and dreams into books that *didn't* rely on costumed heroes—*The Strange World of Your Dreams* and *Black Magic*—but the formula didn't work as well again until Kirby's 1960s work at Marvel.

The other motif that was frequently employed in S&K's work for DC during this golden period was the use of actual news events as the basis for stories. One of the most dramatic

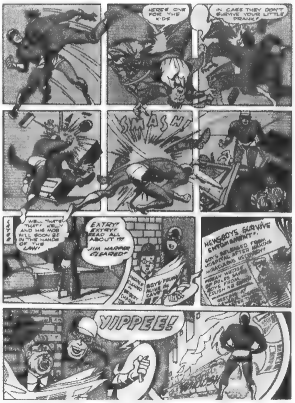
examples of this device can be found in the Newsboy Legion story, "The House Where Time Stood Still". Here we find two elderly brothers who have been living like hermits in an old mansion in the heart of the city. The Newsboy Legion break into the place in order to peddle some war bonds and are turned away by the old recluses. Later the old men change their minds when they learn firsthand about the atrocities committed in the name of Naziism. While this story appeared in the June 1943 issue of *Star Spangled*, its real-life correlation actually didn't appear in the newspapers for another four years, when it was reported that two brothers named Collyer were living in a strange mansion in the heart of New York City, where they had spent twenty years in a hermit-like existence. Their story was revealed only when a tip sent the police to the mansion, where upon breaking in they found the brothers dead amidst a mass of clutter and debris. Prophecy? Or had S&K somehow heard of these strange brothers through the grapevine? (Interestingly, Will Eisner also used the Collyer brothers as the basis for a Spirit story that was published on June 22, 1947.)

A less eerie use of real-life events was the premise of "The Saga of the Little Tin Box" in *Detective* 73. Here we see the Boy Commandos engaged in an all-out effort to save a little tin box from the enemy. After several life-threatening encounters the contents of the box are revealed: scrap tinfoil wrappers that the Commandos were bringing back for the salvage scrap-drive in the U.S. The kids who read *Detective* comics were likely to have themselves participated in a scrap-drive here at home.

Even the name "commandos" had its basis in recent events. Less than a year before the Boy Commandos made their first appearance, the British Commando forces were organized under Sir Roger Keyes. Winston Churchill had given the name of "commandos" to these volunteer units after the Dutch forces who fought in the Boer Wars years earlier.

Simon and Kirby's uncanny sense of timing was also in evidence in the Boy Commandos story "Escape to Disaster" (*Detective* 67). An attack on a submarine base forms the premise of this tale, just months before the March 1942 attack on a sub base in St. Nazaire was reported in the papers. When the story was published in August of 1942, it coincided with a commando raid on Dieppe that took place on August 19 that followed virtually the same pattern. The September 1943 issue of *Detective* offered a story entitled "Fury Rides a Taxicab", in which a 70-ton German tank is stolen by an ex-cab driver. Such tanks didn't actually appear on the battlefields of Europe until a year later. Did S&K employ a spy network to feed them prophetic plots?

The September issue of 1942 told a story about a commando attack on the Italians that appeared at exactly the time that we were invading Sicily and Italy. In *Boy Commando Comics* 4, subtitled "Invasion Issue" and dated September 1943, the actual June 1944 invasion is chronicled. One intriguing parallel was a story about the Boy Commando, Jan whose parachute



became snagged in a tree when he landed. Though wounded and apparently lifeless he hangs in full view of the Germans until he is rescued by the French resistance. During the actual invasion nine months later an American paratrooper did snag his parachute on a church steeple, was wounded and did hang apparently lifeless in full view of the Germans below until he was later rescued. In *World's Finest* number 9, which appeared in the Spring of 1943, a full year before the invasion, the Boy Commandos story depicted the use of dummy parachutists to distract the Germans, a ploy that was actually used during the Normandy invasion in 1944. Realizing that Simon and Kirby were creating these yarns about four to six months before they appeared on the stands makes these parallels and prophecies all the more amazing.

The final recurring motif that one can see in the team's work for DC in this period is their use of the day's popular films and literature for story elements. The film of James Hilton's novel *Lost Horizon* was the obvious basis for the story "The Valley of Destiny" in *Detective 77*. In this story a totally peaceful society is shown confronting the violence of WWII—an isolated community that also happened to utilize atomic energy as its primary power source. Date of story: July 1943, two years before the real age of atomic power exploded at Hiroshima. Even the first Boy Commandos tale (*Detective 64*) invoked several references to Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*—including a character named La Farge—which had been a popular film from the MGM studios in 1935. (S&K had dipped into similar source material while at Timely in stories such as "The Hunchback of Hollywood" in *Cap 3* and "The Phantom Hound of Cardiff Manor" in *Cap 10*, both based on films that appeared in 1939.)

The golden age of Simon and Kirby at DC really lasted for just a couple of years. Although Kirby returned to the company following his war service for work on *Adventure* and *Star Spangled*, the interior stories were never again given full attention by the team (even when signed). They did turn in some excellent covers in 1945, but the prospect of starting their own company and having full creative control was just too tempting, and the team left DC in 1946 to turn out new projects under the Crestwood and Harvey banners. (Much later, in 1957, Kirby would return alone to DC to create the popular *Challengers of the Unknown* title, as well as less memorable Green Arrow and mystery stories.) These marvellous collaborators had much good work left in their pens and typewriters, but were they ever able to match the glorious output of those two years at DC?—more than 80 covers and over 1100 pages of art and stories. It's a legacy that may well be unmatched in the history of the comic book field.

Jack Schiff

Jack Schiff was one of the key editors of the Golden Age of comics. A former pulp magazine editor who hired Mort Weisinger to work for Standard Magazines, Schiff was lured away from a successful freelance writing career by his protege, and joined National Comics in 1942. He remained with the company well into the Sixties as Managing Editor. One of his signal accomplishments was his over twenty year editorship of Batman, a character he was perhaps most qualified to handle, having guided the early pulp heroes, the Black Bat, whose costume bore a striking resemblance to Batman's, and the Bat, a more obscure 1934 character whose origin was strikingly similar to that of the DC character.

C:GA : How did you come to join National?

SCHIFF: Mort Weisinger came to me and begged me to come in there and hold his job until he came back from the Army. And I did. When he returned, I was ready to go back to freelancing. But Jack Leibowitz and Whit Ellsworth said, "No, you'll be Managing Editor and the others will continue in other jobs. You'll have some books to take care of like *Batman* and *World's Finest*."

C:GA: What was it like working at National in those very early days?

SCHIFF: From the time I joined in 42 to about 45, I was practically alone. Both Mort Weisinger and Murray Boltinoff had gone into the Army. Whit Ellsworth was of course our talented Editorial Director. I had to get somebody to assist on copy editing and the animal books, so I hired Bernie Breslauer, who had been with me at Standard Magazines.

C:GA : Your responsibilities, then, cut across every title and stage of production?

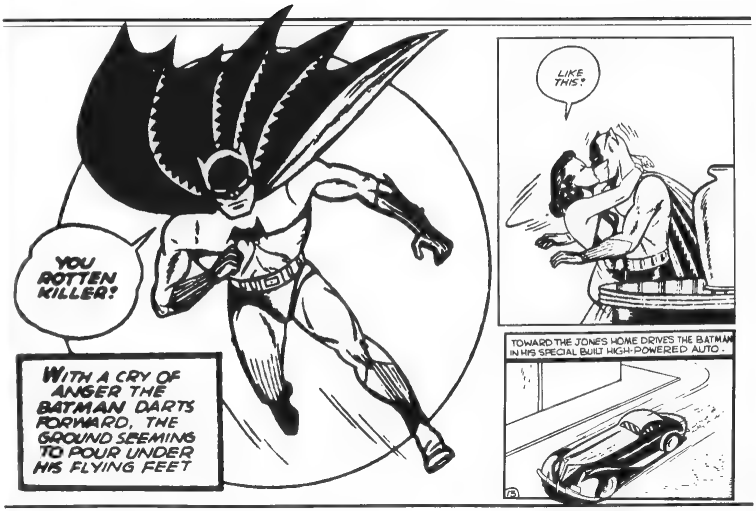
SCHIFF: That's right. Under Ellsworth. Since he was away quite a number of times, he delegated it to me and I had more and more of that.

C:GA : After the war, did you and Weisinger work closely?

SCHIFF: We pretty much operated as close teams with everything. Covers for all the books. Even kicking around plots for *Superman* or *Batman*. It was not strictly a one-man kind of thing as it became afterward. It was much different. In many ways it was a much nicer working arrangement, much pleasanter to work that way. But it was, I must say, somewhat cumbersome. I was trying to keep all the pieces together.

C:GA : Were Superman and Batman always the top-selling heroes at National?

SCHIFF: Yes. At one point, believe it or not, the best seller in the house was *Mutt and Jeff*. We had during the war 99% sales on *Mutt and Jeff*. This is close to a million copies. These reprints used to outsell everything. Of course, plenty of times *Superman* was way up in the upper nineties of a big run.


YOU ROTTEN KILLER!
WITH A CRY OF ANGER THE BATMAN DARTS FORWARD, THE GROUND SEEMING TO POUR UNDER HIS FLYING FEET
LIKE THIS?
TOWARD THE JONES HOME DRIVES THE BATMAN IN HIS SPECIAL BUILT HIGH-POWERED AUTO.

C:GA : During the early comics "boom", did most titles sell well?

SCHIFF: Yes. Percentage wise, they did well. We didn't at first put out the big runs. But when they increased the runs, they managed to maintain somewhat the same percentage. I think I told you about *Real Fact Comics*. It was about 250-300,000 copies. We sold about 80%, but it wasn't enough. They'd love it today!

C:GA : Isn't it true that you had the longest tenure of any Batman *editor?*

SCHIFF: Oh, yes. The first thing I ever had to do with the comics was when Mort asked me to write some *Batman* stories while he was editing. I wrote a couple before he went off to the Army.

C:GA: And after?

SCHIFF: I continued to do some *Batman* stories. Catwoman, particularly. The Joker. I did some other things. I did the first story in National's first Western. And I did some of the stories for the Superman newspaper syndicated strip, which I handled for most of my 25 years at DC.

C:GA: What was Bob Kane like?

SCHIFF: Bob was pretty much of a prima donna, but I would say that nobody who drew *Batman* could capture his inimitable style. Even though it wasn't, from a purely artistic point of view, as technically developed as many of the others. Like Dick Sprang, for example. He would inject the Batman with that dynamism and spirit that kids liked. I can always tell a Bob Kane thing from anybody else's. Bob was a nice guy and he worked like hell. A lot of people thought he sloughed off. He didn't. When he went to Florida or anything like that, he took work down there. I gave him a deadline and he came through.

C:GA : A lot of people give most of the credit for Batman's success to the main writer, Bill Finger. Is that correct?

SCHIFF: Very definitely he inspired the direction of the thing. Mort had a lot to do with keeping it in line with that in the early days and, of course, I did coming in next. It's funny. Not until it was brought out so sharply about the pulps, that Batman was a combination of the Bat and the Phantom Detective, did it really hit me. And I never spoke to Bill or Bob about it. That's where it was taken from. There's no question in my mind that (those characters) must have influenced Bill and Bob.

C:GA : Bill Finger often acknowledged The Shadow's influence.

SCHIFF: No, this is closer to the Phantom. And then the whole business of the Bat and the origin is so similar.

C:GA : With the bat flying in the open window and hero Dawson Clade announcing, "That's it. I'll become the Bat."

SCHIFF: Right. Bill was honest and if I had cornered Bill with that—I don't know why I didn't—he would have admitted it. Bill had many faults, but he was pretty honest and we had a nice relationship. It was a great pleasure to work with Bill plotwise because sometimes with some other guys they'd

DANGER!
MEN AT WORK
THE STORIES OF THE WORLD'S MOST HAZARDOUS OCCUPATIONS
...TO THE STEAMING TROPICS...
IT WOULD HAVE MADE A BETTER SHOT IF HE'D ATTACKED MY ELEPHANT..
THE CAMERA TRAIL LEADS EVERYWHERE FROM SUB-ZERO STORMS OF THE ARCTIC...
THIS SHOW THE PUBLIC HOW THE COAST GUARD REMOVES FLOATING ICEBERGS WHICH MENACE NAVIGATION..

come in and as a kind of token, they'd give you a little outline and it was no good so we had to sit there for two hours and devise a plot. Bill generally didn't come in with an outline. We'd just sit around informally, just the two of us, and we'd kick it around. It wasn't a question of my dictating story to him or anything like that. Bill supplied more than any other writer I ever worked with. I directed and suggested some things. Bill had an excellent pulp and comic sense. His stories had some of that schmaltz that I think was later lost. They say that Batman didn't have any characterization. That's a lot of crap. I went over some of the old *Batman* and they had these nice little touches of humor and, well, schmaltz is the word that describes it, really.

C:GA : The Batman villains were especially like those who fought the Phantom Detective when you edited both titles.

SCHIFF: Yes. It was the challenge kind of thing. In a way it was Holmes/Moriarity.

C:GA : But it went beyond that. I remember an early Phantom villain called the Keyboard Killer, who would send clues to his next crime in the form of songs, baiting the Phantom with a sort of "catch me if you can" taunt that was exactly the kind of thing the Riddler and the Joker later pulled.

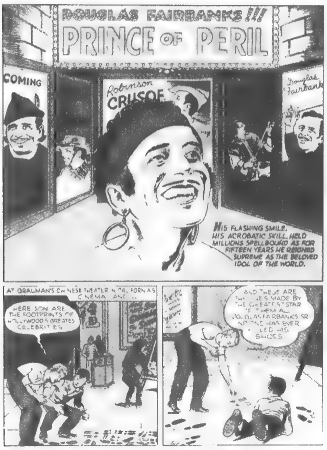
SCHIFF: We found that kind of thing always intrigued kids. The idea of some little puzzle, some little gimmick. That's what got them. They used to write in. Oh, I had letters. Great gimmick. Great little problem. Great little puzzle.

C:GA : Aside from the editors, probably the most unsung people in early comics were the writers, who seldom signed their work and whose styles weren't obvious to readers the way artists' styles were.

SCHIFF: It's true. It was very different, except in a few cases. For example, Don Cameron was probably the most literate of all. He was a real novelist. Some of them were difficult to handle. Especially the better ones. Guys like Bill Finger, Dave Wood, Don Cameron and Eddie Herron. They had little problems, but they were our best writers. Vernon Woodrum was a mystic. Unbelieveable. This guy was really a very, very intellectual guy—we used to have philisophic discussions and whatnot—had this little quirk. His real name was Al Schwartz.

C: GA : Of course you worked with Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster.

SCHIFF: Joe Shuster was the sweetest guy in the world. He was really a wonderful guy. It's unfortunate that his sight began to fail him. He, of course, pencilled and I saw the extent of his talent while Jerry was off in the Army and we put out *Superboy*. We had some paper and a decision was made to put out *Superboy*. And I still remember we had a whole office conference, called Joe in, sat him down. For about two or three hours, he was drawing


DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS III
PRINCE OF PERIL
COMING
Robinson CRUSOE
Douglas Fairbank
HIS FLASHING SMILE, HIS ACROBATIC SKILL HELD MILLIONS SPELLBOUND AS FOR FIFTEEN YEARS HE RIDDED SUPREME AS THE BELOVED IDOL OF THE WORLD.
AT GRAUMAN'S CHINESE THEATRE IN HOLLYWOOD AS CINEMA ANNOUNCES
HERE SOON ARE THE FOOTPRINTS OF HOLLYWOOD'S GREATEST CELEBRITIES
AND THESE ARE THE FOOTPRINTS OF THE GREATEST CELEBRITY OF THE CINEMA ALL THE MOVIE CAMERAS SO NOBLE A MAN EVER LED A BATTLE
SMALL WONDER FOR SUCH HIGH PRAISE IS WARM YOU LOOK BACK UPON THE FABULOUS CAREER OF DOUG FAIRBANKS — IF YOU'VE SEEN SCREEN FEATS LIKE THIS...
FEATS PERFORMED BY STUNT MEN, SPECIAL FITS AND DARING DOUBLES? WELL, YES, BUT IMAGINE DUG... SYNCHRONED NOT ONLY WITH ACTING SKILL BUT WITH ATHLETIC PRECISION AS WELL — THE DESIRE TO DO STUNTS HIMSELF THAT HAS DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS...
IN SWASH HITS LIKE ROBIN HOOD
THE BLACK PIRATE
R-R-RIP!

different sketches until finally we got what we felt was right. Then he drew those first *Superboys*.

C:GA : What comes to mind when I mention young Jack Kirby?

SCHIFF: I still regard him as one of the finest artists in the business. Both as a writer and as an artist, he has enormous talent. Now Joe Simon was a great part of that team. Most people don't realize it because Jack came to the fore all the time. Joe was in the background. Joe did the business arrangements, Joe did the inking. I personally think that in some ways, Joe had the better story sense.

C:GA : So Joe Simon did some of the writing?

SCHIFF: No question about it. *Newsboy Legion* and *Boy Commandos*, two great features we had for quite some time. And they were very popular. I would say that Jack was more creative, but wilder. Joe was the guy who would pull it together. We once had a sort of race in the front office. We had a big artist room. Jack and Mort Meskin were sitting next to each other and there was some copy we needed pretty quickly from both of them. Each of them turned out five pages of pencils. Beautifully. It was really something. After a while, people began to crowd around watching. And they would both go ahead undisturbed. Meskin was a more careful artist than Kirby. And that's where Joe Simon came in, in a sense taming or correcting some of Jack's stuff.

C:GA : I guess the Golden Age of Comics for National ended around 1953, when the line was divided among the different editors. What led to that decentralization?

SCHIFF: In part it was Mort. I have a long letter of his from when he was on vacation once, in which he laid out a detailed plan of a Red Team and a Blue Team. We'd divide the mags between the two of us and I'd have the Red Team for a year or something and he'd have the Blue Team. And then we'd switch around because we both knew all the characters. I think he broached it to the front office and they didn't like the idea. But he was determined to break away and be on his own. I really didn't object because it was getting a little too much for me. It was much easier when Mort began to take on *Superman* and the other stuff and I had the rest with George Kashdan and Murray Boltinoff. Julie Schwartz and Bob Kanigher, of course, had their own books for some time under the general supervision of Whit Ellsworth. They already in a sense had some of that setup, so Mort's taking over of *Superman* and that line paralleled that, so it was a natural kind of transition.

A FORGOTTEN HERO

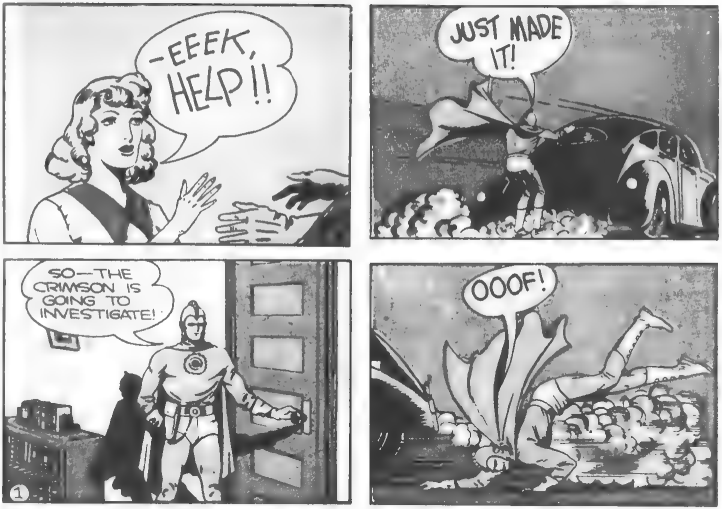
THE CRIMSON AVENGER
BY C.A.R. CHAMBERS
WITH THE BLAST OF BURSTING BOMB-SHELLS, THE C.A. AND WING SMASH DOWN...
BET THAT ISN'T YOUR CONSCIENCE THAT'S HURTING YOU!
WING FLY FAST!
OOPH...
5

As mentioned earlier, Superman's arrival didn't inspire an immediate wave of imitators. The second superhero to come along was Wonder Man, who showed up over in Fox's *Wonder Comics* 1 (May 1939) nearly a year later. DC themselves didn't add any more fellows with superpowers until early in 1940, when the Spectre debuted in *More Fun* 52 (February 1940) and Hour Man in *Adventure* 48 (March 1940). In 1939 they'd signed on two masked and costumed, but not superhuman heroes—Batman in *Detective* 27(May 1939) and Sandman in *Adventure* 40 (July 1939). The Crimson Avenger first appeared in *Detective* 20 (October 1938) and was without a single supernatural ability. He was, however, DC's very first masked man and the first costumed crimefighter after Superman.

The Crimson Avenger owed a great deal to a hero of another color, namely the Green Hornet. The Hornet, accompanied by his "Flight of the Bumblebee" theme, first took to the air over Detroit's WXYZ in 1936 and by the spring of 1938 was being heard nationwide on the Mutual radio network. Whereas the Hornet was in reality Britt Reid, daring young publisher of the *Daily Sentinel*, the Crimson was Lee Travis, daring young publisher of the *Globe Leader*. The only person who knew the Hornet's true identity was his faithful valet, Kato, and the Crimson's secret was shared only by his Chinese servant Wing. If Kato and Wing ever bumped into each other at valets' social affairs, they must've had some interesting notes to compare.

Like the Green Hornet, the Crimson Avenger never used a deadly weapon and preferred to put his adversaries to sleep with a blast from his gas gun. He wore a dark blue slouch hat, a domino mask and an Inverness style cape of crimson hue.

The creation of artist Jim Chambers, the feature was drawn in a rough version of the basic Milton Caniff style. The Crimson's earliest adventures had him fighting civic corruption and organized crime. As were many other masked crusaders, he was misunderstood by the law and thought to be no better than the criminal rats he stalked. Much flashier than the private eyes, gumshoes and cops he was sharing *Detective Comics* with, he had a moment of stardom when he was featured on the cover of 22 (December 1938). You saw him clutching a smoking gun and looming gigantic above a city street that teemed with crooks, gangsters and sinister Orientals. Unfortunately for the Crimson,



Batman showed up in 27 and he was relegated to backup status for the rest of his career. In fact, he dropped out of the magazine soon after his more flamboyant rival appeared and didn't turn up again for nearly a year. He returned, his sulk apparently over, in 37 (March 1940).

The following month Jack Lehti, who was somewhat under the influence of his friend Alex Raymond at the time, took over the drawing and writing. His Crimson Avenger sports yellow gloves and wears a crimson hat to match his flowing cloak. Lehti, with the patience of unjaded youth, devoted considerable time to the rendering of minor details. He was especially inventive with the mist swirling out of the gas gun and his gassed crooks always looked as though they were being engulfed with intricate art nouveau coils.

By the fall of 1940, when heroes in tights were to be seen cavorting in dozens of comic books, the Crimson Avenger looked somewhat old fashioned. Lehti was ordered to convert his hero and provide him with a union suit type costume. In the first panel of his adventure in *Detective* 44 we see him striding into his apartment and announcing, "Okay, Wing, get my new costume ready—the Crimson has work to do tonight!" Wing, who'd apparently studied English at the *Terry and the Pirates* school, inquires, "More bad climinals to punish?" The new costume consists of crimson tights and tunic, yellow shorts and boots plus a crimson cowl and cape. The gas gun is much more futuristic looking by this time. The Crimson took on a costumed sidekick in 59 (January 1942) in the person of his very own Wing. That made him just about the only costumed crimebuster in comics with a non-Caucasian partner.

He appeared also in the first five issues of *World's Finest*. When DC introduced *Leading Comics*, their roadshow version of *All Star*, in 1942, the Crimson Avenger and Wing were aboard. Although the team that went on to overcome such criminal masterminds as the Hand, the Black Star and Dr. Doome was called the Seven Soldiers of Victory, there were actually eight members. The Star-Spangled Kid's sidekick Stripesy was counted, so was Green Arrow's boy buddy Speedy. Wing wasn't.

The Crimson made his final golden age appearance in *Detective* 89 (July 1944) and after a stint in *Leading* 14 (Spring 1945) he, until more recent reincarnations, hung up his gas gun.

PORTFOLIO

BLUE BOLT
by
JOE SIMON and
JACK KIRBY
CRUSHED BY BLUE BOLT AND DOCTOR BERTOFF..THE GREEN SORCERESS-EMPRESS OF THE HIDDEN GREEN EMPIRE...HAS ABANDONED HER DESIRE TO CONQUER THE OUTER WORLD, AND HAS SEEMINGLY CONVINCED BLUE BOLT AND BERTOFF OF HER REFORMATION....
BEING HOPELESSLY BEATEN AND ABANDONED BY ITS CAPTURED LEADER-ANOTHER INVASION BY THE GREEN ARMY IS HELD BY BLUE BOLT TO BE VERY UNLIKELY. MASSING HIS TROOPS IN A LARGE BODY..BLUE BOLT DELIVERS HIS DEMOBILIZATION ORDERS...
...AND BEFORE THE ORDER TO DISBAND IS CARRIED OUT, I
I WANT TO SAY THAT YOU'VE BEEN GOOD SOLDIERS IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD! YOU'VE FOUGHT BRAVELY... AND MANY OF YOUR COMRADES GLADLY GAVE THEIR LIVES SO THAT MILLIONS OF PEOPLE WHO ARE IGNORANT OF YOUR EXISTENCE.. AND WHO MAY NEVER KNOW OF YOUR VALOR...CAN PURSUE THEIR HAPPINESS AS FREE MEN!... AS YOUR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, I CAN ONLY ADD THAT I'M PROUD TO HAVE LED A SUPERB BODY OF MEN.

BLUE BOLT'S WORDS SWEEP AMONG THE RANKS OF HIS FIGHTING FORCES LIKE AN EMOTIONAL TIDAL WAVE! BENEATH THE IMPASSIVE EXTERIOR OF EVERY BATTLE-SCARRED VETERAN AND RAW RECRUIT LIES A DEEP SADNESS AS THE LAST ECHOES OF HIS STIRRING FAREWELL SLOWLY FADE OVER THE SILENT SEA OF RIGID LAMENTING MEN.
THE GREEN SORCERESS IS VISIBLY MOVED... SHE CAN ALMOST FEEL THE LOVE FOR THEIR VALIANT YOUNG COMMANDER EMANATING FROM THE SILENT ARRAY BELOW HER....
THE SILENCE IS SUDDENLY BROKEN BY A THUNDEROUS EAR-SPLITTING ROAR! THE ENTIRE CITY RESOUNDS WITH CHEERS AS A MILLION LOYAL THROATS GIVE VENT TO THEIR FEELINGS!
BLUE BOLT!
HOORAY!!
BLUE BOLT!
'RAY!!
BLUE BOLT TURNS SADLY AWAY... ALMOST OVER-COME BY THE OVATION.
BERTOFF'S SCIENTIFIC CITY.. FREE FROM WAR'S TERROR-ONCE MORE CONTINUES ON ITS BUSTLING, PROGRESSIVE COURSE!
MEANWHILE.. BERTOFF IS AGAIN FREE TO PURSUE HIS SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH... WHICH HE DOES WITH RENEWED VIGOR!
BLUE BOLT AND HIS REFORMED CAPTIVE TOUR THE WONDERS OF BERTOFF'S VAST LABORATORIES!
2

BLUE BOLT! COME TO THE ELECTRICAL LAB AT ONCE! I MUST SEE YOU!
I'VE BROKEN THROUGH THE RADIO-ACTIVE FIELD BETWEEN OUR INNER WORLD AND THE OUTSIDE!
THAT'S GREAT DOCTOR! IT MEANS WE CAN ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH THE OUTER SURFACE!
THE OUTSIDE!
BERTOFF'S HAND TIGHTLY FORCES A CONTROL LEVER FORWARD...AS THE ENTIRE CHAMBER DARKENS... THE GREAT TELE-SCREEN CRACKLES WITH LIVING, LEAPING STREAKS OF RELEASED ENERGY! A PULSING, BLUISH GLOW SLOWLY BRIGHTENS THE DARKENED SCREEN!
LOOK-BERTOFF THOSE MEN... I'VE SEEN THEM BEFORE! WHY-THEY ARE TWO DICTATORS!
BLUE BOLT RECOILS IN HORROR AS BERTOFF WIDENS THE FOCUS OF THE TELE-SCREEN, AND SHIFTS THE SCENE TO OTHER PARTS OF EUROPE.
GREAT SCOTT! WAR'S BROKEN OUT! BERTOFF! THOSE PLANES ARE MACHINE-GUNNING REFUGEES!
HER GAZE RESTS ON THE TACTICS USED BY THE INVADING FORCES!
3

SHE WATCHES STIFF RESISTANCE TURN TO HOPELESS ROUT BEFORE THE ONSLAUGHT OF SWIFT MECHANIZED UNITS...ACCOMPANIED BY LOW FLYING DIVE-BOMBERS!
THE GREEN SORCERESS STARES WITH RAPT ATTENTION AT THE INSIDIOUS MACHINATIONS OF THE DREADED FIFTH COLUMN...
MILITARY MEN AND OFFICIALS OF A DOZEN NATIONS ARE INVOLVED IN ITS INFAMOUS ACTIVITIES!
CONQUERING HORDES STAMP TRIUMPHANTLY THROUGH CITIES DESERTED BY THEIR POPULATION AND BETRAYED BY THEIR LEADERS!
CAN'T STAND ANY MORE OF THIS! I'M TURNING IT OFF!
YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL, SON...IT'S NOT A PLEASANT SIGHT TO SEE FREE MEN MURDERED BETRAYED AND ENSLAVED! BLOOD-MAD DICTATORS TROD SKULL-PAVED ROADS THINKING THEY HAVE CRUSHED FREEDOM AND ARE HEADED FOR GLORY!
...BUT THEY'RE WRONG - BLUE BOLT! FREEDOM CAN NEVER BE CRUSHED PERMANENTLY! IT'S INDESTRUCTIBLE! IT ALWAYS RISES FROM ITS BATTERED STATE TO WAIT AT THE END OF THAT BLOODY ROAD AND ADMINISTER ITS OWN JUSTICE TO THE EGOTISTICAL FOOLS WHO SOUGHT TO DESTROY IT!

THE GREEN SORCERESS IS INDIFFERENT TO DOCTOR BERTOFF'S PHILOSOPHY...SHE FINDS THE BLITZKRIEG AN INTERESTING SUBJECT FOR THOUGHT...THE THIRST FOR POWER ONCE MORE STIRS IN HER--
DOCTOR BERTOFF'S LITTLE DEMONSTRATION TODAY HAS BEEN MOST ENLIGHTENING...THIS DICTATOR'S FORMULA FOR CONQUEST HAS MANY INTRIGUING FEATURES! I WONDER IF ITS METHODS WOULD BRING THE SAME SUCCESSFUL RESULTS IF THEY WERE APPLIED TO THE...GREEN ARMY?
LATE THAT NIGHT-THE SORCERESS COMMUNICATES WITH GOVERNMENTAL HEADQUARTERS IN THE GREEN KINGDOM... VIA A SECRET MICRO-WAVE TRANSMITTER!
ATTENTION...WAVE STATION...ZT--7... SUMMON GENERAL LHOKAR IMMEDIATELY AND GIVE HIM THIS MESSAGE...YOUR EMPRESS COMMANDS...
IN A COMMUNO-ROOM SOMEWHERE IN THE GREEN EMPIRE-GENERAL LHOKAR RECEIVES HIS QUEEN'S
CONVEY MY RESPECTS TO HER MAJESTY... TELL HER THAT OPERATIONS WILL BEGIN AT ONCE
GENERAL LHOKAR FOLLOWING HIS QUEENS INSTRUCTIONS...BEGINS TO RESTORE THE GREEN ARMY TO ITS FORMER MIGHT
5

AURA-BELT TROOPS AND FIELD EQUIPMENT DROPPED BY LOW FLYING ROCKETS, IS PART OF THE GREEN ARMY'S NEW TRAINING PROGRAM.
TRAINED AGENTS OF THE GREEN FIFTH COLUMN FILTER INTO THE SCIENTIFIC CITY'S KEY INDUSTRIES.... WAITING FOR THE SIGNAL TO DISABLE ALL IMPORTANT INDUSTRIAL CENTERS!
EVEN BERTOFF'S LABORATORY STAFF IS NOT IMMUNE FROM PENETRATION!
THE GREEN SORCERESS-FEIGNING ILLNESS... ORDERS HER DINNER BROUGHT TO HER ASSIGNED ROOMS.
I'M THE NEW COOK, YOUR MAJESTY...! VENTURED TO BRING YOUR DINNER MYSELF! I'D APPRECIATE ANY WORTHY COMMENT ON MY HUMBLE ENDEAVORS!
THE MEAL SEEMS WELL PREPARED, MY MAN.... I'VE SEEN YOU BEFORE.... WHERE?
THANK YOU, HIGHNESS... COLONEL RUX OF GREEN INTELLIGENCE! THE SIGNAL HAS BEEN GIVEN... WE ATTACK AT ONCE!
SNATCHES OF CONVERSATION REACH THE EARS OF BLUE BOLT.... WHO STUMBLES UPON THE CONSPIRACY AS HE PAYS A VISIT TO THE SUPPOSEDLY AILING SORCERESS
6

QUIETLY RETRACING HIS STEPS BLUE BOLT ROUNDS A CORRIDOR BEND WHERE HE WAITS FOR THE PSEUDO COOK.
HIS STEELY ARM SUDDENLY ENCIRCLES THE PASSING COOK AND CRUSHES HIM INTO SILENCE....
THE SPY IS RUSHED TO A PSYCHO-LAB, WHERE HE IS PLACED UNDER A MECHANICAL BRAIN PROBER...
BLUE BOLT IS STUNNED AS THE ENTIRE DIABOLICAL PLAN IS WRESTED FROM THE SPY'S SUBCONSCIOUS MIND!
COUNTER-MEASURES ARE SWIFTLY TAKEN.. HUNDREDS OF GREEN AGENTS ARE CAUGHT IN THE ACT OF SABOTAGE!
WE'VE CAUGHT ALL THE MICE WITHOUT WARNING THE RATS!
NOW TO CATCH THE RATS!
UNAWARE OF HIS COMRADE'S FATE.. BERTOFF'S SPY ASSISTANT FALLS TO HIS GRIM TASK.
7

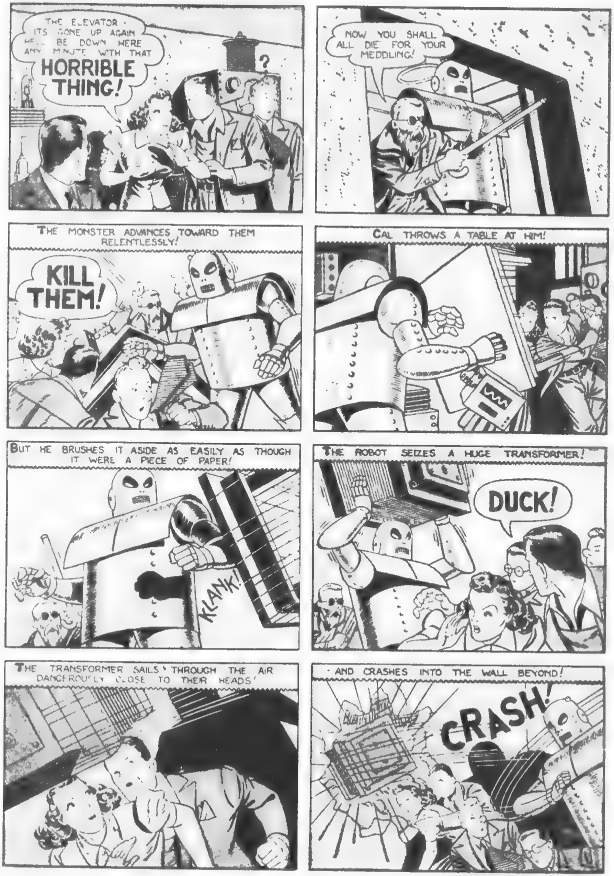
BUT THE CHIEF OF THE ENEMY AGENTS IS INTERCEPTED BY BLUE BOLT...
MEANWHILE...THE GREEN BLITZKRIEG HAS BEGUN..... THOUSANDS OF AURA-BELT TROOPERS PLUNGE EARTHWARD TO SEIZE CONTROL OF THE SCIENTIFIC CITY'S VITAL AREAS!
DEADLY SWARMS OF GREEN BOMBING ROCKETS RAIN DESTRUCTION ON THE CLUSTERED BUILDINGS BELOW THEM!
INSTEAD OF FINDING THE CITY RENDERED DEFENSELESS BY GREEN SPY ACTIVITIES— THE INVADERS ARE MET WITH A COUNTER-ATTACK THAT IS UNEQUALLED IN ITS FEROCITY!
THE FURIOUS COUNTER-FIRE SWEEPS THE SKIES LIKE AN INVISIBLE SCYTHE.. TAKING A HUGE TOLL IN THE RANKS OF THE DESCENDING AURA-BELT TROOPS!
BLUE BOLT'S ROCKET FORCE TEARS SKYWARD TO MEET THE INVADING AIR ARMADA!
THE SKY BECOMES A VAST WELTER OF HURTLING ROCKETS! DEATH IS EVERYWHERE ..IN THE WHINE OF THE RAY GUN.. AND IN THE OILY SMOKE TRAIL OF A FLAMING VICTIM!
8

THE BATTLE FOR BERTOFF'S STRONGHOLD PROGRESSES WITH EVER-INCREASING VIOLENCE. THE SORCERESS IS ASTONISHED AT THE AMAZING COUNTER-THRUSTS DELIVERED BY BLUE BOLT'S ARMY!
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! BLUE BOLT'S LINES ARE HOLDING! SOMETHING MUST HAVE GONE WRONG!
SO! YOUR AMBITION HAS AGAIN CONQUERED YOUR SENSE OF HONOR AND DECENCY! YOU'LL NEVER GET ANOTHER CHANCE TO PULL A TRICK LIKE THIS!
YOU FOOLS! DO YOU THINK I WILL EVER GIVE UP UNTIL THE DESTINY THE GODS HAVE CHOSEN FOR ME IS FULFILLED? I AM THE GREEN SORCERESS! MY MAGICAL POWERS ARE UNLIMITED! MY ARMIES SHALL YET RULE THE EARTH .... AND I SHALL SEE BOTH OF YOU DESTROYED!
SUDDENLY BERTOFF SHOUTS A WARNING AS THE FAMILIAR GREEN AURA APPEARS ONCE MORE...ITS WEIRD GLOW EMANATING FROM THE SORCERESS' LOVELY BODY WHICH GROWS HAZIER IN THE PULSING LIGHT!
9
MADDENED BY HER MOCKING WORDS, THE ENRAGED BLUE BOLT HURLS HIMSELF INTO THE BLAZING GREEN AURA, DETERMINED TO CAPTURE THE SORCERESS - EVEN IF HE MUST PURSUE HER THROUGH HADES ITSELF!

BLUE BOLT EMERGES FROM THE GREEN AURA TO FIND HIMSELF THE VICTIM OF A SURPRISE AMBUSH BY AN ENTIRE COMPANY OF THE SORCERESS' ROYAL GUARD!
THEY CAN'T OVERPOWER HIM! USE THE PARALYZER GUN, CAPTAIN SARN... HE MUST BE SUBDUED!
WELL...MY FOOLHARDY YOUNG GENERAL.... YOU'VE PLAYED RIGHT INTO MY HANDS.
HIS BODY FROZEN TO THE RIGID... A MASSIVE... BLUE BOLT IS PLACED ON A PEDESTAL IN A REINFORCED ROOM, ARMED SENTRIES KEEP CONSTANT VIGIL OVER THEIR MOST VALUABLE CAPTIVE!
THE GREEN SORCERESS' MOMENTS SHORT-LIVED HOWEVER AS THE TELEPATHIC SORCERESS REVEALS THE SHATTERED REMNANTS OF HER ONCE PROUD ARMY FLEE NO BEFORE BLUE BOLT'S VICTORIOUS FORCES....
WILL BLUE BOLT ESCAPE HIS CAPTORS? YOU CAN FIND OUT IN THE NEXT EXCITING ISSUE OF BLUE BOLT
10

THREE COMRADES
Lassy
Cal
Bones
THE THREE COMRADES ARE SPENDING A VACATION ON THE ISLAND OF PUERTO RICO, AT THE COFFEE PLANTATION OF TOM CARROLL, AN OLD FRIEND OF CAL'S
BOYS I WANT YOU TO MEET MY SISTER CAROLINE
HOME WAS NEVER MADE AT HOME
NEXT DAY THE BOYS GO ON A HIKE
IT'S STARTING TO RAIN. WE'D BETTER FIND SHELTER I THINK I SAW A HOUSE OVER IN THAT DIRECTION.
MEANWHILE AT A HOUSE NEARBY WE FIND CAROLINE CARROLL TALKING TO A STRANGE MAN
I KNOW THE PAYMENTS ARE DUE DOCTOR ZORN BUT I BEG OF YOU TO WAIT JUST A LITTLE LONGER!
NO- NO- I HAVE GIVEN YOUR BROTHER ENOUGH TIME NOW HE MUST PAY OR LOSE THE PLANTATION! MY PATIENCE IS AT AN END!
GO AWAY!
BANG!
NOT NOW MISTER! WE'VE HAD SUNK ENOUGH TO GET IN OUT OF THE RAIN EVEN IF YOU HAVEN'T!
SOCK!
A SHOT!
KNOCK KNOCK
NO ANSWER LETS TRY THAT OTHER DOOR
AH THEY ONE OPEN- LOOKS LIKE A WORKSHOP
A RARE TYPE OF ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT
THERE WAS SOMEONE IN THE OTHER BUILDING SOMEONE WE KNOW! IT WAS CAROLINE I SAW HER THROUGH THE WINDOW!
THE DOCTOR AND CAROLINE EAVESDROP ON THE CONVERSATION OF THE THREE COMRADES
YOU HEARD I SAW HER THROUGH THE WINDOW!
THAT DON'T YOU? THEY ARE CURIOUS ABOUT THIS PLACE AND ABOUT YOU BEING HERE! I HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE BUT TO KEEP THEM PRISONERS.

THE STORM HAS ABATED LETS GET OUT OF HERE
WE CAN'T! THE DOORS LOCKED!
AND THE WINDOWS ARE BARRED!
MEANWHILE
COME UPSTAIRS WITH ME I WILL SHOW YOU WHAT I HAVE BEEN WORKING ON THESE PAST FIVE YEARS!
LOOK!
WATCH I WILL COMMAND HIM TO LIFT THAT WEIGHT! IT IS ONE THOUSAND POUNDS!
YOU SEE HE WILL DO ANYTHING I TELL HIM TO DO!
NOW THROW IT!
CRASH!
HA-HA HO-HO-HO I SHALL BE MASTER OF THE WORLD!
YOU ARE MAD!
THE GIRL RUNS TO AN ELEVATOR WHICH GOES DOWN TO THE ROOM WHERE THE BOYS ARE IMPRISONED!
CAROLINE!
HELP! THE MONSTER!


THE ELEVATOR IS GONE UP AGAIN
HE'S BE DOWN HERE ANY MINUTE WITH THAT HORRIBLE THING!
?
NOW YOU SHALL ALL DIE FOR YOUR MEDDLING!
THE MONSTER ADVANCES TOWARD THEM RELENTLESSLY!
KILL THEM!
CAL THROWS A TABLE AT HIM!
BUT HE BRUSHES IT ASIDE AS EASILY AS THOUGH IT WERE A PIECE OF PAPER!
KLANK!
THE ROBOT SEIZES A HUGE TRANSFORMER!
DUCK!
THE TRANSFORMER SAILS THROUGH THE AIR DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO THEIR HEADS!
AND CRASHES INTO THE WALL BEYOND!
CRASH!

HURRY THROUGH THAT HOLE!
DON'T NEED A PUSH!
LESS DON'T PU ME NOW
A RAID QUICK BLOW
WAIT! BE CAREFUL EVERYBODY I'LL LIGHT A MATCH
LOOK OUT! LUCKY!
BOOTS JUST CATCHES HIM IN TIME TO KEEP HIM FROM FALLING INTO A DEEP HOLE!
GO AFTER THEM! KILL THEM ALL- I COMMAND YOU!
AH GONZALES WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? GO IN THERE AND SHOOT TO KILL!

BANG!
THE VIBRATIONS FROM THE SHOT CAUSE THE ROOF OF THE CAVE TO FALL!
HELP!
WE CANT GO ANY FURTHER THIS IS THE END OF THE CAVE!
LOOK OUT! HERE HE COMES!
THE MONSTER BRUSHES CAL ASIDE AND SEIZES CAROLINE!
HELP!
STOP!
HE OBEYED YOU CAL HOW COME?
I MERELY IMITATED HIS MASTERS VOICE!
BUT THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE IS SEALED UP.
PERHAPS IF I GIVE ANOTHER IMITATION-
PULL THOSE ROCKS AWAY
DOESN'T HE CARE WHERE HE THROWS 'EM!

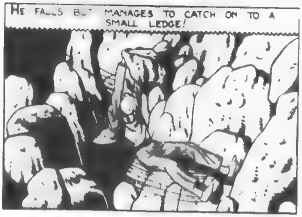
AH! DAYLIGHT!
KILL THEM!
TELL YOU
OUCH!
RUN CAROLINE!
THE ROBOT TAKES AFTER THEM!
UH I TRIPPED! DON'T STOP!
WHAT BIG FEET YOU HAVE GRANDPA!
HELP!
CAL TRIES TO ATTRACT THE ROBOTS ATTENTION!
TAKE THAT

NAH-NAH, YOU CAN'T CATCH ME

CAL RUSHES TOWARD THE HOLE LUCKY PREVIOUS FELL INTO!

HE JUMPS OVER THE YAWNING PIT!

OH, OH I'M NOT GOING TO MAKE IT

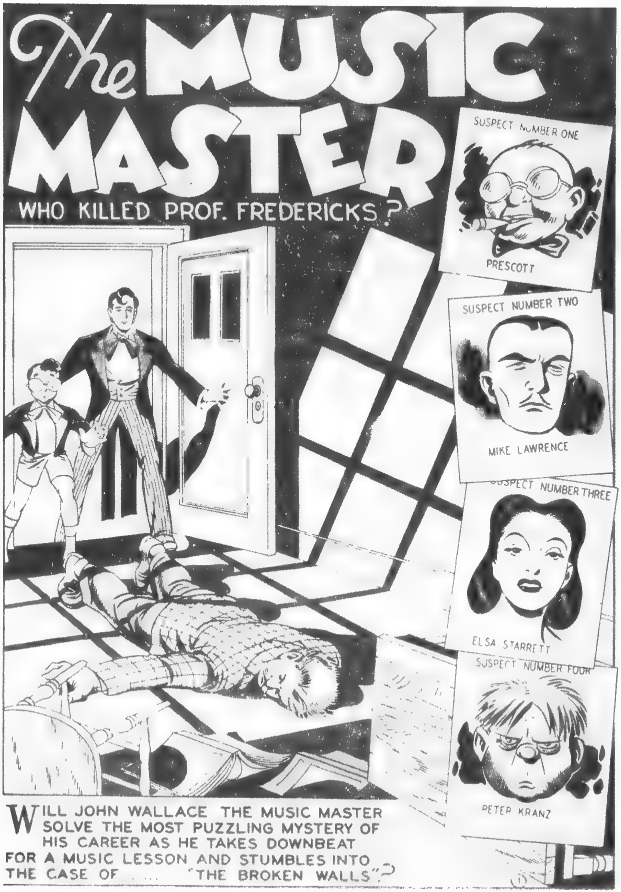

HE FALLS BUT MANAGES TO CATCH ON TO A SMALL LEDGE!

OH HELLO! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

THE MONSTER STARTS HEAVING HUGE ROCKS DOWN AT CAL!
THAT'S A CUTE IDEA

HURRY BOYS- DO SOMETHING CAL'S DOWN THERE!

PUSH!
THEY CATCH THE ROBOT OFF BALANCE!
GOODBYE JOE! I CAN'T SAY I'M GLAD TO HAVE MET YOU THOUGH
I'M GLAD THAT'S THE END OF HIM! HE WAS CALLING ME GREY HAIR!
CAROLINE WHO IS THAT MAN?
HE IS DOCTOR ZORN MY BROTHER OWES HIM MONEY AND ZORN HAS THREATENED TO TAKE OVER THE PLANTATION!
WE'RE NOT HERE! HE MUST HAVE GONE BACK TO THE HOUSE.
I'M TAKING THIS LENGTH OF PIPE ALONG! HE MAY HAVE ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE TIN MEN OVER THERE!
MY LIFE'S WORK IS LOST! NOW WE SHALL ALL DIE! WHEN I PULL THIS SWITCH THE BUILDING WILL BE BLOWN UP!
FIRE!
DO YOU THINK DOCTOR ZORN WAS DEAD?
I'M SORRY IF THE SHOCK FROM THAT SHORT CIRCUIT WAS TOO MUCH FOR ANY MAN TO TAKE THROUGH!
NOW I'LL GO AND NEED A VACATION!
THINK NOTHING OF IT WE HAD A LOT OF FUN!
HOW CAN WE EVER THANK YOU!
FUN?!
FOLLOW THE THREE COMRADES TO NEW ADVENTURES IN NEXT MONTH'S THRILLING COMICS!


The MUSIC MASTER
WHO KILLED PROF. FREDERICKS?
SUSPECT NUMBER ONE
PRESCOTT
SUSPECT NUMBER TWO
MIKE LAWRENCE
SUSPECT NUMBER THREE
ELSA STARRETT
SUSPECT NUMBER FOUR
PETER KRANZ
WILL JOHN WALLACE THE MUSIC MASTER SOLVE THE MOST PUZZLING MYSTERY OF HIS CAREER AS HE TAKES DOWNBEAT FOR A MUSIC LESSON AND STUMBLES INTO THE CASE OF .... "THE BROKEN WALLS"

A [illegible] APARTMENT
LISTEN DOWNBEAT SWING MUSIC IS ALL RIGHT, BUT YOU'VE GOT TO GIVE SYMPHONY SOME ATTENTION. GET INTO YOUR COAT.
WHAT, A SAX SECTION? UH? WHAT DID YOU SAY, JOHN?
I SAID GET YOUR COAT ON YOU'RE GOING FOR A MUSIC LESSON
AW JOHN HAVE A HEART PLEASE!
MINUTES LATER
COME ON, DOWNBEAT, BUCK UP! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE A TOOTH PULLED YOU'LL LIKE YOUR NEW MUSIC TEACHER
YEAH I'LL GIVE HIM
EVEN IF I CAN'T MAKE YOU FORGET SWING MUSIC, OLD FREDERICKS WILL / HE'S A REAL CHARACTER / DRESSES AND TALKS LIKE 1890 -- AND READS A DOZEN GORY MURDER MYSTERIES A WEEK
HO HUM
WELL, HERE WE ARE / I HAVEN'T BEEN HERE IN YEARS / HOP OUT, JITTERBUG /
OKAY DON'T RUSH ME
IF HE'S AS RICH AND SUCCESSFUL AS NEWSPAPERS SAY HE IS, WHY DOES HE LIVE IN A DUMP LIKE THIS?
I TOLD YOU HE WAS ECCENTRIC SHHH HERE HE COMES
HERE HE'S NOW / MIND YOUR MANNERS
BUT AS THE DOOR OPENS JOHN WALLACE AND DOWNBEAT ARE CONFRONTED WITH A HORRIBLE SIGHT.

FOR A SPLIT SECOND PROFESSOR FREDERICKS STANDS THERE SCREAMING HORRIBLY THEN HE FALLS TO THE FLOOR
YOU WON'T GET THAT MUSIC LESSON, DOWNBEAT PROFESSOR FREDERICKS IS DEAD!
I'M SORRY JOHN, I KNOW HOW YOU FELT ABOUT HIM ///
SUDDENLY DOWNBEAT RUSHES TOWARD THE DOOR
JOHN DO YOU SUPPOSE HE DIED OF A HEART ATTACK BECAUSE OF SOMETHING HE SAW BEHIND US? I'LL TAKE A LOOK
DOWNBEAT GOOD HEAVENS, DON'T TOUCH THAT DOOR-KNOB ///
CLANG
AND JOHN WALLACE BECOMES A PART OF THE RESULTING SOUND--THE MUSIC MASTER
CLANG
AS DOWNBEAT RUSHES FORWARD, HIS FOOT COLLIDES WITH THE METAL DOOR.
WHEW! JUST IN TIME /
WITH THE AID OF MY MUSIC I CAN SHOW YOU WHAT I MEAN THIS KNOB IS WIRED WITH ENOUGH ELECTRICITY TO KILL TWENTY MEN!
GOOD GRIEF!

PROFESSOR FREDERICKS WAS MURDERED/ THE KILLER PUT THIS NON CONDUCTOR IN THE CENTER SO THAT ONLY A PERSON TOUCHING THE KNOB ON THE INSIDE WOULD GET THE ELECTRICAL BURST/ THE KILLER DIDN'T WANT SOMEONE OUTSIDE TO SPOIL HIS PLANS BY BEING KILLED
THE KILLER MUST HAVE SET THIS APPARATUS DURING THE NIGHT WHILE FREDERICKS WAS ASLEEP
WHO DO YOU THINK COULDA DONE IT JOHN?
I DON'T KNOW YET TAKE A LOOK AT THIS I FOUND IT ON THE FLOOR
er meth
lectric
IT'S BEEN TYPED ON FREDERICKS' MACHINE I RECOGNIZE THE CROOKED LETTERS
THAT LECTRIC IS PROBABLY PART OF ELECTRIC OR ELECTRICITY BUT THE REST IS GIBBERISH C'MON, LET'S GO/
WHERE ARE WE HEADED? AREN'T WE GOING TO CALL THE POLICE?
SURE WE'RE GOING TO CALL THE POLICE--LATER/ WE CAN'T BE SLOWED UP NOW BY BEING UNDER SUSPICION IF THE POLICE DON'T GET THE KILLER WE WILL/

AND SO LATER.
WHAT? PROFESSOR FREDERICKS MURDERED? WHAT'S THAT? WATCH OUT FOR AN ELECTRICALLY WIRED DOORKNOB? WHO'S TALKING?
WHY.. HE'S HUNG UP!
WEEKS PASS. THE FREDERICKS MURDER MAKES HEADLINES THEN SLIPS TO BACK PAGE OBSCURITY
FREDERICKS MURDER STILL UNSOLVED
POLICE ADMIT BAFFLEMENT.
THE POLICE WERE CALLED TO THE SCENE OF THE CRIME BY A MYSTERIOUS PHONE
LOOKS LIKE THE POLICE NEVER FOUND OUT YOU PHONED THEM
I'M GLAD THEY DON'T DOWNBEAT WE'RE NOT UNDER SUSPICION AND WE ARE FREE TO INVESTIGATE
LUCKY THE POLICE HAVENT LEFT A GUARD AROUND THIS KEY OUGHT TO DO THE TRICK.
INSIDE ANOTHER STRANGE SIGHT MEETS THEIR EYES
HOLY CATFISH! WILL YOU LOOK AT THAT!
THE POLICE DIDN'T MAKE THAT MESS. SOMEONE WANTED SOMETHING BAD AND I THINK WHOEVER DID THE HUNTING WAS THE KILLER
LETS SEE IF THE KILLER LEFT A CLUE OF ANY KIND
J-J-J-
JOHN
UGGHH.
BUT AS JOHN WALLACE STRUGGLES TO ESCAPE

THE BREAKING GLASS TINKLES
COOL THE YOU CAN FEEL THE TENSE FINGERS
WHAT, WHAT'S HAPPENING
BUT THIS OUGHT TO HOLD YOU!!!
SUDDENLY THE DOOR BURSTS OPEN·····
NOW LET'S SEE IF HE GOT HIM OH!
WELL FOR THE LOVE OF PETE! ELSA STARRETT!!!
ELSA! DON'T TELL ME YOU STILL CAME FOR VIOLIN LESSONS UP TILL····
NO, OF COURSE NOT I WAS THE PROFESSOR'S SECRETARY WHEN HE···· DIED SO YOU WERE WANDERING AROUND A FEW HOURS AGO··AND DID THIS TO THE PROFESSOR'S APARTMENT.
HOURS AGO? WHY, DOWNBEAT AND I HAVE BEEN HERE JUST A MATTER OF MINUTES
WELL, SOMEBODY SEARCHED THIS APARTMENT, PETER KRANZ··· THE MAN YOU KNOCKED OUT···CAME IN TO CLEAN UP AND FOUND THIS. HE PROBABLY THOUGHT YOU WERE COMING BACK FOR ANOTHER TRY.

KRAM IS RECOVERING ... ASK HIM A FEW QUESTIONS
IT'S NO USE JOHN HE CAN'T HEAR YOU
PETER WAS IN A TRAIN ACCIDENT YEARS AGO. HE CAME OUT OF IT--HIS MIND AND HIS HEARING BOTH GONE. ALL HE CAN MAKE NOW IS A FEW DOLLARS EACH WEEK HELPING THE JANITOR
ALL YOU CAN DO IS WRITE QUESTIONS IN SIMPLE LANGUAGE AND SHOW HIM
THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY I WISH THOUGH SOMEONE HAD SEEN THE PERSON WHO SEARCHED THIS PLACE
SUDDENLY DOWNBEAT POINTS TO THE DOOR.
I HAVE JOHN RIGHT NOW AT THE DOOR
SO YOU'RE ALL AFTER THE DOUGH TOO? LIFT YOUR MITTS HIGH!

LOOK AT THIS MESS PRESCOTT THEY MUST'VE FOUND THE DOUGH!
HEY WE'RE GONNA TAKE IT AWAY FROM THEM!
J
THERE IS A SHARP WHISTLE AS THE STEAM VAPOR ESCAPES
TWEET
AND JOHN WALLACE BECOMES THE MUSIC MASTER!
NOW TO TAKE CARE OF THESE "WO"
SAVE ONE FOR ME!
HEY COME DOWN TO MY LEVEL!
THAT'S A PAL!
I KNOW THOSE MEN JOHN. THEY WERE THE ONLY CLIENTS THE PROFESSOR HAS HAD SINCE HE TAUGHT YOU AND ME! I KNEW THESE TWO WEREN'T TRUE MUSIC STUDENTS! I FINALLY TALKED THE PROFESSOR INTO DISMISSING THEM THEY WERE AFTER HIS MONEY! HE'S SUPPOSED TO HAVE A FORTUNE HIDDEN IN THIS HOUSE

I HADN'T KNOWN THE PROFESSOR RETIRED. WHAT DID HE DO WITH HIS SPARE TIME, ELSA?
HIS HOBBY WAS MURDER MYSTERIES. HE WAS ALWAYS CHASING AROUND THE CITY LOOKING OVER FAMOUS CRIME SITES. HE WAS EVEN IN THE PROCESS OF WRITING A STORY WHEN HE WAS KILLED
A STORY. WE GOT THE SOLUTION TO THIS MYSTERY AND PRESCOTT AND LAWRENCE DON'T DO IT
CERTAINLY DON'T DO IT AND WE AN PROVE IT
THE PAPERS SAID THAT THE DEATH TRAP COULDA BEEN SET ONLY THE NIGHT PRECEDING THE MURDER. BE WE WERE IN JAIL THAT NIGHT ON A TRUMPED UP CHARGE. WE JUST GOT OUT YESTERDAY. THE BUMP OFF WAS A SURPRISE TO US
BUT THE KILLER IS IN THIS ROOM! WE WERE THE ONLY ONES SMART ENOUGH WITH THE PROFESSOR TO HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SET UP THE APPARATUS BUT I DIDN'T DO IT. I WAS OUT OF TOWN. I CAN PROVE IT
I KNOW YOU DIDN'T DO IT... AND I KNOW I DIDN'T DO IT. SO I AM PRESCOTT AND LAWRENCE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT BECAUSE PETER KRANZ DID
JOHN WALLACE EXPLAINS
THE THING THAT KEPT ME FROM ACCOMPLISHING MY DIABOLICAL PLAN WAS MY SLOWNESS OF WITTEDNESS. I WAS SURE OF MY INCREDIBLE MENTALNESS, EVEN FROM THE LITTLE I SAW OF HIM, WASN'T FAKED. YET THIS CRIME WAS CONCEIVED BY A BRILLIANT MIND
DON'T YOU SEE WHY IT HAD TO BE KRANZ? DIDN'T YOU WONDER ABOUT THE BROKEN WATCH?
WHEN I SAW THE WALLS SMASHED IN THE SEARCH FOR THE MONEY, I ASKED MYSELF WHY DID THE KILLER GO TO THAT BOTHER? WHY DIDN'T HE JUST TAP FOR A HOLLOW PLACE? HE DIDN'T TAP BECAUSE HE COULDN'T... HE COULDN'T HEAR THE HOLLOW SOUND BECAUSE HE WAS DEAF!

AND HIS CLEVERNESS IN CAMOUFLAGING THE CRIME WAS REALLY FREDERICKS KRANZ WAS FOLLOWING A STORY FREDERICK WROTE THAT SCRAP OF PAPER SAYING 'ER METH AND LECTRIC' WAS PART OF SPECIFIC MURDER METHOD DIRECTIONS TELLING HOW TO SET THE ELECTRIC DEATH TRAP
SO YOU KNOW DO YOU? I'LL KILL YOU!
THERE'S YOUR CUE, MUSIC MASTER TAKE CARE OF HIM!
JOHN WALTERS BECOMES THE MUSIC MASTER
YOU'LL KILL ME EH? DON'T BET ON THAT, KRANZ
I DON'T LIKE PEOPLE WHO BOAST.
HERE'S FREDERICK'S SCRIPT, JUST AS I SAID. SEND FOR THE POLICE ELSA. THEY CAN TAKE KRANZ AWAY--AND I'LL HAZARD THE GUESS THAT FREDERICKS MONEY IS HIDDEN IN KRANZ'S APARTMENT.
AND AFTER IT'S ALL OVER—
THANKS FOR HELPING ME OUT WHEN KRANZ RUSHED ME DOWNBEAT BUT THAT STILL DOES NOT CHANGE MY MIND WE'RE GOING TO ANOTHER TEACHER YOU'RE GETTING A MUSIC LESSON!
AW JOHN PLEASE HAVE A HEART!

The FACE
by MICHAEL BLAKE
KNOWN TO THE WORLD ONLY AS A GRIM, ELUSIVE PHANTOM — WEIRD AND UNCANNY IN ITS FRIGHTFULNESS — THE FACE HAS BROUGHT ABOUT JUSTICE IN PLACES TOO REMOTE AND HIDDEN FOR THE POLICE
IN REALITY THE FACE IS TONY TRENT, RADIO COMMENTATOR OF STATION WBSC.
— ALL FOR TO NIGHT, FOLKS OF THE RADIO AUDIENCE. I'LL HAVE MORE NEWS FOR YOU TO-MORROW NIGHT AT EIGHT
AS TONY TRENT TALKS, A YOUNG ARTIST ACROSS TOWN IS BUSILY ENGAGED
ONLY A FEW MORE STROKES — THEN I'LL BE THROUGH
THE DOOR BANGS OPEN AND TWO MEN ENTER
MAKE THE STROKES COMIN'
WHAT—WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I'M THE HOOK SISTER! I JUST GOT WORD YOU INHERITED A COUPLA MILLION DOLLARS. YOUR ESTATE WILL PART WITH A FEW GRAND TO GET YOU BACK
3
OVERCOME WITH TERROR, GLORY YOUNG PLEADS FOR TIME TO FINISH HER CANVAS
GIVE ME FIVE MINUTES — TIME TO COMPLETE AND SIGN THIS
OKAY — BUT MAKE IT SNAPPY! WATCH HER, CLICK!
THE VANITY OF THE HOOK IS TICKLED, SO HE ALLOWS GLORY TO FINISH HER PAINTING
IT AIN'T ALLA TIME I SNATCH ARTISTS. GO AHEAD, SISTER, AN' PAINT AWAY!

I'M READY NOW.
I READ ABOUT YOU IN THE PAPERS — YOU'RE A GLAMOUR GIRL TURNED ARTIST, AINTCHA? AN' TO THINK YOU'RE INHERITING ALL THAT DOUGH, BOY.
ONE PEEP FROM YOU, SISTER — AND YOU GET LEAD IN YOUR BACK.
NOBODY'S LOOKIN', HOOK.
AS TONY TRENT WORKS ON HIS RADIO COPY, HIS BELL RINGS...
DARN THAT PHONE — JUST WHEN I'M WORKING.
WHA-AT! GLORY YOUNG KIDNAPPED JUST AFTER SHE INHERITED THAT DOUGH, YOU SURE?
SURE I'M SURE! SHE FINISHED MY PICTURE — WHEN I WENT TO CALL FOR IT, I FOUND HER GONE. A TENANT IN THE BUILDING SAW HER GO OUT WITH TWO MEN — SAW A GUN — LEANED FROM THE WINDOW ABOVE THEM. HELLO! HELLO!
THIS CALLS FOR WORK FOR THE FACE. I'D BETTER BE ON MY WAY.
THE FACE PREPARES FOR ACTION AS TONY TRENT SLIPS ON HIS RUBBEROID MASK
WITH THIS MASK I HEREBY BECOME — THE FACE!
THE HIDEOUS FACE STARTLES A PASSERBY
EEEEK!
SORRY, LADY — BUT I'M TAKING NO CHANCES!
2

THROUGH THE ROAR OF TRAFFIC
FIRST A VISIT TO GLORY'S APARTMENT BEFORE THE POLICE ARRIVE.
NOT A THING DISTURBED! I WAS ONLY HOPING — SOME CLUE —
UNDER HER SIGNATURE SHE PAINTED A HOOK. WHY? HOOK— HOOK— HOOK HORNER.
HOOK HANGS OUT IN A SNAPPY APARTMENT. I'LL HAVE TO GET UP ON THE ROOF AND SNEAK DOWN— HE'LL BE WATCHING FOR SOMEBODY TO COME UP.
I'M GLAD THIS IS A SELF-SERVICE ELEVATOR. OTHERWISE THE ELEVATOR BOY WOULD BE TOO SCARED TO RUN IT.
UP TO THE TOP FLOOR GOES THE FACE.
THE STAIRWAY OUGHT TO BE NEAR HERE
NOW FOR HOOK'S APARTMENT —
HE HANGS BY A CLOTHES-LINE OVER THE EDGE OF THE ROOF —
WHEN — IF I FALL — !

— AND STANDS ON A WINDOW LEDGE
WELL, I'M HERE — BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM AS THOUGH ANYONE ELSE IS — THE ROOM'S PITCH-BLACK!
I'VE GOT TO LOOK OVER THE PLACE / THE HOOK MAY HAVE LEFT SOME —
THE LIGHT GOES ON —
WHAT A FACE!
SURPRISE
WATCH MY FACE — AND NOT MY FIST!
UMF!
GLORY YOUNG!
AS GLORY ALMOST
SEES HER
THANK — OH!
NEVER MIND HOW I LOOK — HURRY UP AND GET FREE OF THESE CORDS!
GRAB HOLD OF THE CORD YOU'LL FIND THERE AND PULL YOURSELF UP.
I'M AFRAID — BUT I'M MORE AFRAID OF THE HOOK!
MY CAR IS DOWNSTAIRS — WE'LL HAVE TO LEAP ACROSS ANOTHER ROOF AND GO DOWN THROUGH THE NEXT BUILDING

THE FACE AND GLORY ARE ALMOST AT HIS CAR —
WE'RE SAFE!
THANK THE LORD!
— WHEN A SHOT RINGS OUT ABOVE THEM!
HE SMASHES ME — THEN GRABS THE GIRL AND BEATS IT!
GET THE CAR — WE'LL FOLLOW THEM!
WITH A GOOD START, THE FACE OPENS UP HIS POWERFUL ROADSTER —
I DON'T SEE THEM!
STEP ON IT — THEY CAN'T BE SO FAR AHEAD! THIS ROAD STRETCHES FOR MILES IN A STRAIGHTAWAY!
I'M DOIN' SEVENTY NOW!
SLOWLY THE RECKLESS HOOK OVERTAKES THEM —
HE PREPARES TO LEAP —
SWERVE OVER NEAR THEIR CAR — I'M JUMPIN'!
THE HOOK HURTLES THROUGH THE AIR —
— AND FASTENS HIS METAL CLAW IN THE CAR!
SURRENDER, FACE — OR I FILL YOU WITH LEAD!

INSIDE THE ROADSTER THE FACE MOVES SWIFTLY—
JUMP, GLORY— JUMP FOR YOUR LIFE!
GLORY LEAPS FREE —
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
I MUST GET THAT GUN AWAY FROM HIM!
THE CAR TWISTS TOWARD THE WOODEN RAILING OF A HIGH BRIDGE —
I'M CAUGHT — MY HOOK IS CAUGHT— I CAN'T WORK IT LOOSE!
SAVE ME! SAA-AVE MEEEE!
THE FINAL PLUNGE!
GET OUT, CLICK— AND IF I EVER HEAD OF YOU MAKING ANOTHER "SNATCH" — YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'LL GET!
IT WAS THE HOOK'S IDEA — HONEST!
OFF TOWARD TOWN TO DELIVER A SAFE GLORY YOUNG GOES THE FACE —
TEN MILES TO TOWN — AND ME WITH A FLIGHT PAID OF NEW SHOES!
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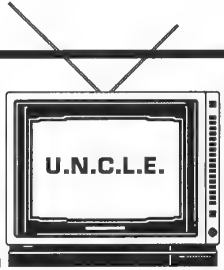

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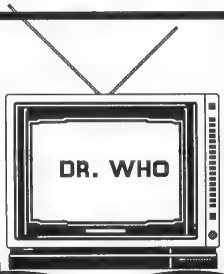

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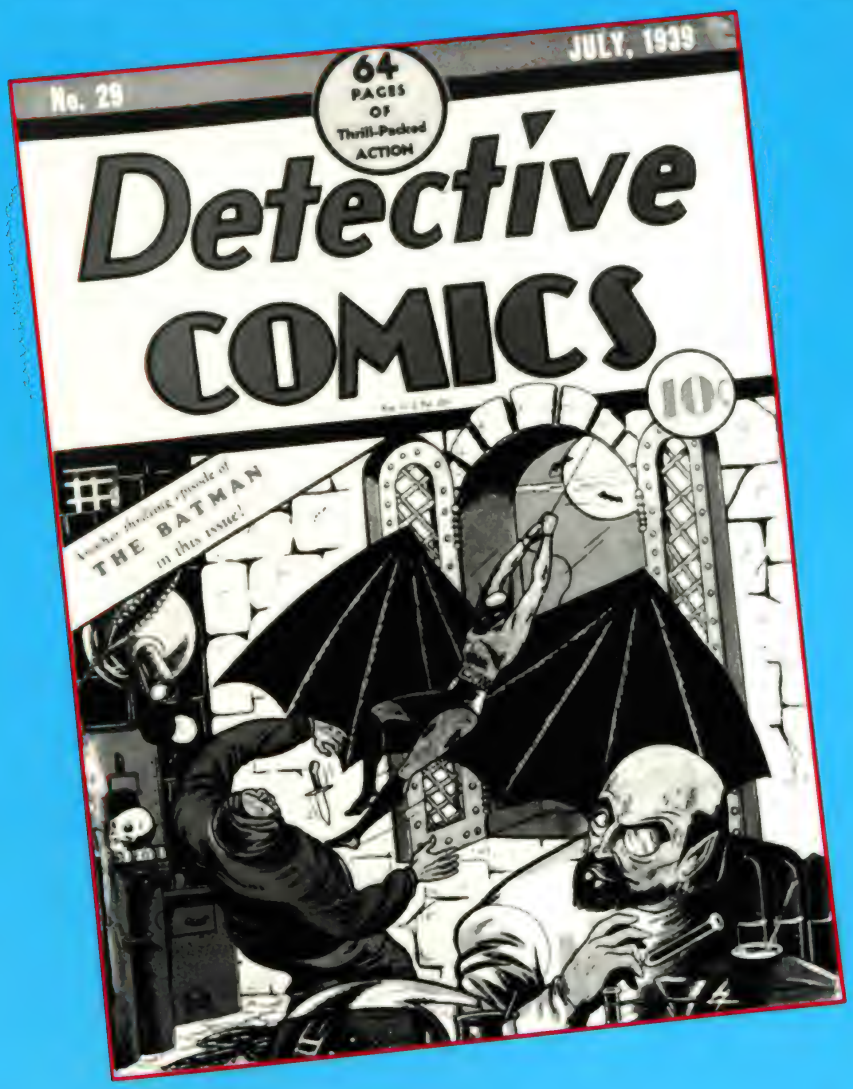

Dedicated to the marvelous imaginations of
the creators who brought the DC Universe to life

EDITED BY RON GOULART

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an issue of comics: the golden age

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Dedicated to 'Bob Kane, father of the bat

CONTENTS

DC TITLES 9
THE ALL AMERICAN BRANCH 27
THE FUNNY STUFF 37
Sheldon Mayer & Scribbly 41
THE CREATORS 47
Golden Age Memories 48
Simon & Kirby 52
Jack Schiff 56
A FORGOTTEN HERO 61
GOLDEN AGE PORTFOLIO 65
Blue Bolt 67
Three Comrades 77
The Music Master 85
The Face 95
SPECIAL BATMAN SECTION 101
Batman 103
Rogues Gallery 107
Bob Kane & Company 110

INSIDE THE ROADSTER THE FACE MOVES SWIFTLY —
JUMP, GLORY — JUMP FOR YOUR LIFE!
GLORY LEAPS FREE —
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
I MUST GET THAT GUN AWAY FROM HIM!
THE CAR TWISTS TOWARD THE WOODEN RAILING OF A HIGH BRIDGE —
I'M CAUGHT — MY HOOK IS CAUGHT — I CAN'T WORK IT LOOSE!
SAVE ME! SAA-AVE MEEEE!
THE FINAL PLUNGE!
GET OUT, CLICK — AND IF I EVER HEAR OF YOU MAKING ANOTHER "SNATCH" — YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'LL GET!
IT WAS THE HOOK'S IDEA — HONEST!
OFF TOWARD TOWN TO DELIVER A SAFE GLORY YOUNG GOES THE FACE —
TEN MILES TO TOWN — AND ME WITH A TIGHT PAIR OF NEW SHOES!
PAINTING A HOOK UNDER YOUR SIGNATURE WAS CLEVER, MISS YOUNG — IT GAVE ME THE CLUE I NEEDED!
I ONLY HOPED SOMEONE WOULD UNDERSTAND IT!

SPECIAL BATMAN SECTION

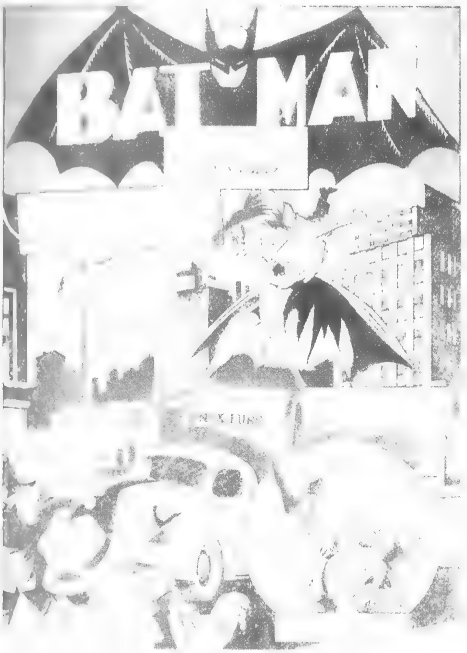
HERO ★★ PROFILE

If the Golden Age of Comics had anything it was heroes. Big heroes, little heroes, business-suited heroes and colorfully-costumed heroes of every shape and coloration. This feature will profile one of the stars of the 1940s every issue.

BATMAN

Forty-five years ago a small typeset announcement appeared in *Detective Comics*. "THE BATMAN!" it said. "This new thrilling adventure strip starts in the May issue of DETECTIVE COMICS! Don't miss it!" A month later 27 (May, 1939) hit the stands and there on the cover was Batman, swinging over the rooftops with an armlock around the throat of a hoodlum in a green pinstripe suit. Inside the new hero led off the issue in a short, six-page story. Although the pointy ears on his cowl were a little lopsided and his batwing cape didn't fit exactly right, there was something intriguing about him. Once he shaped up and got his act together there was no stopping him. For a costumed hero without a single superpower he's managed to survive quite well while hundreds of latter day competitors have long since fallen by the wayside.

At the time Batman took to the rooftops there were few costumed crimefighters doing business in the comic books. During the eleven months since the advent of Superman only the Crimson Avenger had set up shop. A



cloaked and masked fellow whose methods of operation were remarkably similar to those of radio's Green Hornet, the Avenger debuted in *Detective* 20 (October, 1938). It wasn't until after Batman that the deluge commenced. Before 1939 was over Wonder Man, the Sandman, the Flame, Blue Beetle, the Human Torch, Sub-Mariner and Amazing Man had all reached the newsstands. 1940 would see dozens more, including the Flash, Captain Marvel and Green Lantern.

Living up to its name, *Detective Comics* had featured nothing but detective characters in its first two years. Private eyes like Slam Bradley, Bruce Nelson and Larry Steele, official lawmen of various sorts such as Speed Saunders, Buck Marshall and Steve Malone. Even the redcloaked Crimson Avenger devoted himself to solving crimes and bringing criminals to justice. Batman therefore, when joining the magazine, was expected to carry on in this tradition. And that he did for the most part, rarely forgetting that he was basically a detective. True, he dressed in a rather striking fashion, but so did many of the pulp magazine crimebusters who'd inspired his creators.

One of the things the new original-material comic books of the 1930s did was deliver pulp magazine and movie elements in a funny paper format. The popular entertainments the artists and writers of this burgeoning new industry had enjoyed while growing up now got recycled and turned into comic book stories. Batman is one of the most successful examples of this, inspired by movie melodramas and pulpwood yarns but becoming a distinctive character in his own right. When Bob Kane and his writer friend Bill Finger invented Batman, they were only a few years out of their teens themselves and still very much in touch with the kind of adventure material that had excited them as kids.

Though pulpwood fiction magazines had been around for most of the century, it was in the Thirties that the single hero pulps really blossomed. *The Shadow* began in 1931, followed by *Doc Savage*, *The Spider* and *The Phantom Detective* in 1933, *The Whisperer* in 1936 and *The Avenger* in 1939. The Thirties was definitely the decade of the mystery men and they were to be found in just about every other popular entertainment medium as well. Radio offered the Lone Ranger and the Green Hornet, movies gave you such as Zorro, the Scarlet Pimpernel and the Lone Wolf, newspaper strips had the Phantom.

Bill Finger once said, "My first script was a take-off on a Shadow story...I patterned my style of writing Batman after the Shadow. Also after the Warner Bros. movies, the gangster movies." Kane has mentioned that another source of inspiration was a 1926 movie called *The Bat*, "in which the villain wore a bat-like costume which was quite awesome." Originally *The Bat* was a highly successful Broadway play by Avery Hopwood and Mary Roberts Rinehart. It was filmed again in 1931, under the title *the Bat Whispers*, with tough guy Chester Morris starring. Basically an old dark house story, it has to do with stolen money, secret rooms and passages and a crazed killer who dresses up like a bat. I recently saw the 1931 talkie version and the nightstalking Bat,

especially when prowling the rooftops or casting his weird shadow on a wall, certainly seems to be an ancestor of our Batman.

In civilian life Batman was Bruce Wayne, "a bored young socialite." When night fell, however, playboy Wayne became "powerful and awesome" and a "weird menace to all crime." Unlike his more sedate contemporaries in the private investigator line, Batman didn't wait for cases to come to him. He prowled the city (New York in the earliest adventures and then Gotham), looking for trouble. He always found it, dropping down on burglaries, kidnapings, murders and worse. Although not above wisecracking while tangling with a half dozen gunmen, Batman was a pretty grim vigilante type in his early days. Besides his gadget-laden utility belt, he carried a .45 automatic and was not above using it. A trained athlete and acrobat, he was capable of breaking a man's neck with a wellplaced kick.

During his first months as a nocturnal avenger Batman alternated between combating gangsters and criminal masterminds. In *Detective* 29 and 30 he encountered a mad scientist who'd more than earned his nickname Dr. Death. Issues 31 and 32 found him journeying to Paris and Hungary to save his fiancee, Julie Madison, from the sinister Monk. A versatile as well as a nasty fellow, the Monk was both a vampire and a werewolf. In this two parter we get our first glimpse of the batarang and the batplane. In these distant days the citizens of Manhattan were unused to such stylized modes of transportation as the batplane and when Batman flies over most of them are frightened—"We are attacked by Martians!" A few issues later Batman meets yet another master villain in the person of Professor Hugo Strange. A Moriarty sort and possessed of a "brilliant but distorted brain," the prof recurs a few times in the chronicles. He can make lightning, produce crippling fog and is also handy at creating giant man-monsters.

Batman's origin, the inside story on "who he is and how he came to be," didn't appear until *Detective* 33 (November, 1939). In a terse two page account we are told that fifteen years

ago Bruce Wayne's parents were gunned down on the street by a stickup man and that the boy vowed to dedicate his life to "warring on criminals." Having no supernatural powers, Wayne has to work at becoming a hero. He devotes years to preparing for his crimefighting career, turning himself into both a master scientist and a crackerjack athlete. Determining that he'll need a disguise capable of striking terror into the hearts of criminals, he's inspired by the intrusion of a bat into his den. "It's an omen...I shall become a BAT!" The origin, with a new splash panel, turned up again in *Batman* 1 (Spring, 1940).

Another major event in Batman's life was recounted in *Detective* 38 (April, 1940). He acquired a sidekick. "An exciting new figure whose incredible gymnastic and athletic feats will astound you...A laughing, fighting young daredevil who scoffs at danger like the legendary Robin Hood whose name and spirit he has adopted...Robin the Boy Wonder." Bob Kane once explained, "In my subconscious mind I longed to be like Robin when I was his age, fighting alongside

his idol Batman (or in my case, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr.). I figured Robin would appeal to all children of his age group as an identifiable person for their inner fantasies." Finger amplified, "Batman was a combination of Fairbanks and Sherlock Holmes. Holmes had his Watson. The thing that bothered me was that Batman didn't have anyone to talk to, and it got a little tiresome always having him thinking. I found as I went along Batman needed a Watson to talk to. That's how Robin came to be. Bob called me over and said he was going to put a boy in the story to identify with Batman. I thought it was a great idea." Jerry Robinson, Kane's assistant at the time, had a few more facts to add about the dynamic youth's gestation. "I thought of Batman's new partner as a sort of young Robin Hood....I remember plugging the name Robin against others that didn't seem quite as good," he's recalled. "Once we agreed upon the name, I suggested adapting Robin Hood's costume for the new character."

Much later Kane had some second thoughts about the addition of the Boy Wonder. "I prefer Batman operating alone and mysteriously, like the Shadow," he told an interviewer in the early 1970s. "Before Robin he was that way, and his style changed then. When Robin comes in, they begin punning and joking." Even at the time not all kid readers doted on and identified with Robin. Jules Feiffer has said, "One need only look at him to see he could fight better, play ball better, eat better, and live better—for while I lived in the east Bronx, Robin lived in a mansion, and while I was trying, somehow, to please my mother—and getting it all wrong, Robin was rescuing Batman and getting the gold medals. He didn't even have to live with his mother. Robin wasn't skinny. He had the build of a middleweight, the legs of a wrestler. He was obviously an 'A' student, the center of every circle, the one picked for greatness in the crowd—God, how I hated him."

The majority of readers, though, liked the new team. Rival crimefighters were also fascinated and over the next couple years many added a boy companion to the staff—Sandy, Roy, Bucky, Speedy, Dusty, etc. Batman, as noted earlier, was given his own magazine in 1940, the first DC hero so honored after Superman. It began as a quarterly, jumped to bimonthly with the sixth issue and by the 1950s was a monthly. Batman and Robin also showed up in the 1940 edition of *New York World's Fair* and, thereafter, were in its successor *World's Finest*.

Why exactly did Batman and Robin succeed where so many others failed? For one thing there was the look of Bob Kane's work. His cartoony style, carried on and amplified by Robinson, fit the sort of melodramatic, nighttime stories he and Finger loved to spin. "Batman's world took control of the reader," says Feiffer. "Kane's was an authentic fantasy, a genuine vision, so that however one might nit-pick the components, the end product remained an impregnable whole: gripping and original." The stories, particularly in the World War II years, were good. Borrowing a little from O. Henry, from Damon Runyon, from the movies. And, of course, Batman and Robin came up against, as we'll see in another piece, some of the best all time villains in comics—the Joker, the Penguin, Catwoman, etc.

The puns, too, were fun, the badinage between the crimebusting team and the crooks. Robin fighting a crook on a golf course, tossing a ball into the thug's open mouth and exclaiming, naturally, "A hole-in-one!" Batman smacking the Penguin with a handy mop and saying, "This will clean away some of your hot air!" And you know that almost any specific locale was going to inspire wisecracks. During one battle with the Joker and his minions in a post office the following lines were among those heard—"That cancels you!" "You can start a stamp collection with these, Joker!" "Gangway! The mail must go through!" Any regular Forties reader can readily conjure up the pictures to go with this dialogue.

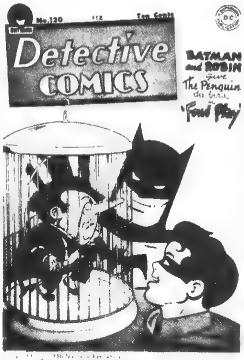
Another appeal was the gimmicks and props. The batplane and batmobile, in their various incarnations. The utility belts, which seemed to contain an endless supply of life-saving gadgets. The Batcave, which first showed up in the early 1940s, was also fascinating and was something I wouldn't have minded having under my house in place of a damp, musty basement. The cave kept expanding, growing from a garage to a garage-laboratory-trophy room.

The subsidiary characters, too, were appealing. Commissioner Gordon, who was in the saga from the very first episode, was on the dull side. But any policeman who was imaginative enough to use the bat signal had to be okay. Alfred, a very Wodehousian butler, joined on in 1943. He was a likeable fellow, whether in his original fat mode or in his later slim state.

The fact that both Batman and Robin were vulnerable, that they could be hurt or killed, added to their appeal. Though rationally you knew DC wasn't going to let Kane and crew kill off either member of its hottest team, you suspended logic and anguished over Batman's reaching the diving bell before Robin suffocated. You hoped against hope that they'd find a way out of the subterranean room before the spiked ceiling minced them.

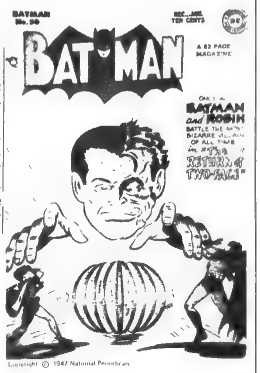
Unlike the other heroes we've profiled in this section, Batman is still very much with us. So this account can't conclude with a rundown of his final days and last adventures. Although there are some of us who feel the real Batman hasn't been seen since...

ROGUES GALLERY



THE BATMAN ROGUES GALLERY

One of the best ways to judge a comic book hero is by the villainous company he keeps. Batman and Robin, especially during the Golden Age, did combat with quite a few attractive and entertaining villains. Some were star turns, many were in the second banana class. In the following pages we'll take a look at both the greats and the near greats.



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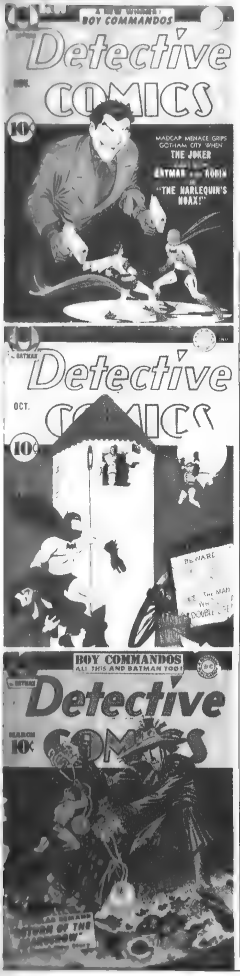
THE STAR VILLAINS

Batman's leading opponent is unquestionably that "harlequin of hate," the Joker. A man who combines the mastermind qualities of Professor Moriarty, the fiendishness of Fu Manchu and the audacity of Groucho Marx, the Joker first struck in *Batman* 1 (Spring, 1940). In fact, he struck twice, in the first and last of the magazines four tales. Borrowing some of his tricks from such flamboyant predecessors as the Bat of stage and screen, the Joker was fond of warning his victims in advance as to exactly where and when he would rob and kill them. Until he crossed swords with Batman and Robin, he'd been getting away with this sort of behavior.

The most appealing thing about the Joker was his inventiveness. While his main goal in life remained loot — jewels, cash, objects of art — he was continually varying his methods. On one caper he and his gang would rely on costumes and uniforms, next he'd base a series of murders on the punchlines of old jokes. On another occassion he undertook to commit a crime a day, daring Batman to stop him. On another he made use of flower pots with built-in chloroform sprayers to commit his robberies. He prided himself on being perplexing. He once gave money away, once began a series of crimes by stealing a kid's autographed baseball. And there was always the challenge to Batman and the law, the cryptic message sent, the note left at the scene of the crime.

The purple-clad Joker quickly became the team's most frequently fought foe. In 1940 they met him five times in *Batman* and *Detective*. The number of clashes dropped to three in 1941, then climbed to an impressive eight in 1942. The total was down to four in 1943, but considering that the Joker had been killed in 1942 that wasn't bad. The demise of the master of mockery took place in *Detective* 64 (June, 1942), the same issue that introduced Simon & Kirby's Boy Commandos. The Joker walks the last mile and we see him executed in the electric chair. Fortunately for all lovers of first-rate villains, his henchmen administer a secret drug to his corpse, "shocking him back to life!" Learning little from his execution, and this may be further proof that capital punishment really isn't a deterrent to crime, the Joker quickly resumes his evil prankish ways.

We do get a brief, tantalizing glimpse



of what a nice guy the Joker could be in *Batman* 16 (April-May, 1943). In a story entitled *The Joker Reforms* the grinning gargoyle of greed suffers a head injury in a plane crash. This transforms him into a prince of good fellows, the benefactor of a small Western town and the enemy of crime. A conk on the noggin, alas, causes him to revert to his original self. After that it's one more mad scheme after another.

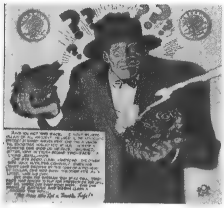
There's little doubt as to who *the* woman in Batman's life is. She too first showed up in the fateful first issue of *Batman*. Calling herself the Cat initially, she is first seen as a clever and cunning jewel thief at a party aboard a posh yacht. Although Batman prevents the attractive, darkhaired young woman from stealing a single gem, he allows her to escape. "Lovely girl! What eyes!" he reflects after Robin chides him over the Cat's escape. You'll note that Batman seems to have somewhat different tastes than the amiable playboy Bruce Wayne, and is capable of being attracted by a beautiful lady crook.

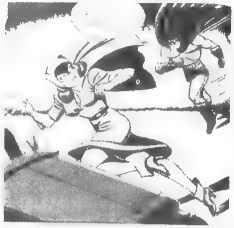
She returns in the second issue of *Batman*, this time called alternately the Cat and Cat-woman. In this adventure the Joker is on hand as well and the two compete for a cask of rare gems. When the meanminded Joker is about to do Robin in with a poison hypo, the Catwoman intercedes and offers him the loot if he'll spare the lad. Once again, at the story's end the lady escapes.

She pops up again in the spring of 1942, for the first time wearing a cat mask. Batman thwarts the mistress of menace's latest jewelry racket and also saves her life when one of her disgruntled minions tries to shoot her. Grateful, she unmasks and kisses him. "And before the startled Batman can recover his wits, the shadowy Catwoman has slipped out of the room, like some elusive phantom." That remained the pattern for most of their subsequent encounters.

Another of Batman's favorite foes was the polite and dapper little scoundrel known as the Penguin. Dressed in tails and top hat, with one of his dangerous umbrellas clutched in his gloved hand, he wandered onto the scene in *Detective* 58 (December, 1941). A loner, he simply walks in on one of the biggest racketeers in Gotham City and takes over his mob. He recurred in the next issue and from then on made frequent appearances. In *Batman* 25 (October-November, 1944) he even teams up with the Joker. It isn't an especially fruitful or efficient merger, since the two spend much of their time squabbling and calling each other names — "I'll teach you manners, you babbling buffoon!" "Why, you waddling windbag!"

One of the great moments in Golden Age comics occurs at the end of the Batman yarn in *Detective* 66 (August, 1942). Two-Face is holding a gun on Batman and he tells him that he'll flip his two-headed coin to decide what to do. "If the scarred side comes up . . . I kill you and continue a career of crime, and if the good side comes up . . . I go with you!" He tosses the coin, it hits the floor and rolls until it hits a crack "and stands on edge!" We have to wait for two months before we learn which way Two-Face will go. In issue 68, although he doesn't shoot Batman, he





does resume his life of evil deeds. His whole career, however, seems to cease in *Detective* 80 (October, 1943), when Harvey Kent, former handsome District Attorney, is rehabilitated and has the half of his face that was horribly scarred by acid restored. Unfortunately, so novel a villain, a man who was, in his own words, "A living Jekyll and Hyde," couldn't be allowed to retire and he was to come back again and again.

A colorful villain of the early 1940s was the Scarecrow. Although he appeared only a couple of times, he managed to make a strong impression. An eccentric and disgruntled academic, the long lean Jonathan Crane decides to apply his knowledge of psychology to the acquiring of large amounts of money by criminal means. Dressing up to resemble a sort of demented Ray Bolger, he becomes the Scarecrow, "a symbol of poverty and fear combined." Initially he hires himself out to scare people, but resorts to murder when the scare tactics don't get results. Batman and Robin put an end to his shabby career in *World's Finest* 3 (Fall, 1941), but he strikes again in *Detective* 73 (March, 1943). This time he uses one of the Joker's mannerisms and keeps leaving Batman challenging messages about his next crimes. Being an ex-teacher, he scrawls these taunts on school slates in chalk.

THE MINOR LEAGUE BAD GUYS

Batman and Robin used up a lot of crooks and villains. Twelve a year in *Detective Comics* alone, not counting minions, stooges and toadies. Add to that one more in each of the four adventures in the *Batman* bimonthly and four additional each year in the *World's Finest* quarterly stories. That's a grand total of forty criminals per annum. Quite obviously they couldn't all be equally great and colorful. Yet even though they were often minor threats, they deserve a bit of notice for having the nerve to pit themselves against the formidable dynamic duo and filling in the gaps while star heavies like the Joker, the Penguin and Catwoman were resting up between schemes.

Since Batman and Robin operated in a large city, they had their share of run of the mill crooks and crime bosses to deal with. These included fellows like Bugs Norton, Rocky Grimes, the Thumb, Big Costello and Zucco. This last racketeer was riding high in Gotham when Batman and Robin teamed up and was their first jointly-defeated bad guy. Most of these lesser gangsters shared one easily recognizable trait. When fleeing the scene of a crime, they always carried a satchel of loot in the left hand and fired back over the shoulder at pursuing lawmen with a blazing .45 automatic.

Perhaps sensing something of a kindred spirit in Batman, quite a few villains with a flair for dressing up in weird outfits challenged him. There was, for example, the Cavalier, who first surfaced in *Detective* 81 (November, 1943). Billed as "the dashing desperado," he looked like Bob Kane's boyhood idol, Douglas Fairbanks Sr., dressed like a musketeer and carried a sword. Aware of the tough competition he faced in the bizarre villain area, the Cavalier warns Batman and Robin that he intends to be "an even greater inconvenience to you than the Joker and the Penguin."

Among the other oddly-attired crooks and killers who tangled with the duo in the Forties were Clayface, a *Phantom of the Opera* sort who did his evil deeds on a Hollywood soundstage, the Conjurer, the Robber Baron, Granda the Mystic, Dmitri the diabolic puppet master and Mr. Baffle, whose costume consisted of a stylish tuxedo. There was also a trio of larcenous acrobats who did their dirty work wearing devil suits.

Crazed medics and flawed intellectuals also tried to outfox BM and the Boy Wonder. The wicked Dr. Thorne can be found in *Detective* 77 (JUly, 1944) running a crime clinic. Then there was the fiendish Dr. Deker, whose use of a machine that grabs secrets out of people's minds earned him the nasty nickname of the Brain Burglar. Even more dangerous was Professor Radium, one of the earliest radioactive villains in comics. And in *World's Finest* 7 (Spring, 1943) a crazed mystery novelist switches to plotting real life misdeeds and calling the operation the Crime of the Month.

Unlike many of their comic book contemporaries, Batman and Robin didn't get too involved in World War II. They spent the early and middle 1940s on the home front, keeping track of domestic villainies for the most part. With the exception of a few encounters with Nazi agents, they ignored the fact that there was a war on. For slavering Japanese and brutal Nazis you had to look elsewhere. The only sinister Orientals the team went up against were the sort who hung around in Chinatown. In addition to metropolitan criminals, they battled an occassional pirate and smuggler and even, when vacationing out west, rounded up a gang of cattle rustlers.

Quite obviously part of the success of the team was due to the quality of evildoers they busied themselves with during their first years in the crimefighting trade. Their prime antagonists were among the best in the business and even their lesser foes were, for the most part, a fascinating bunch.

BOB KANE and COMPANY

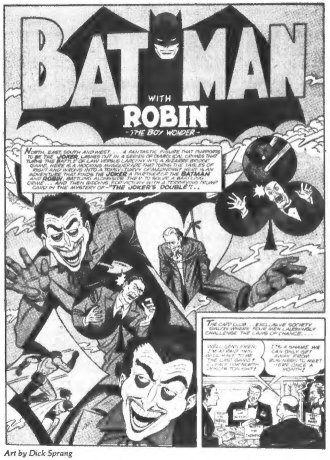
BETTER TELL ME, JOEY -- OR I'LL ...
DON'T YOU THINK THAT FELLOW MIGHT CATCH COLD WITH HIS CHEST EXPOSED LIKE THAT?
WHO ARE YOU?
I KNOW WHO HE IS! THAT'S THE BATMAN!
AM I INTRUDING, GENTLEMEN?
GUN-SLOPPILY LOOSES THE BATMAN
"THE BATMAN, EH? WELL, YOU'RE NOT SO SMART AS YOU MIGHT SEEM!"
ON THE CONTRARY...

Batman was the creation of a young man from the Bronx who'd drawn gag cartoons and humorous fillers before trying his hand at more serious fare. He had some help from a young shoe salesman with aspirations to be a writer. Eventually their increasingly successful hero would require a whole crew of artists, writers and editors to produce his adventures.

Bob Kane began his professional career in 1936, drawing a funny feature for the shortlived *Wow!* The editor there was Jerry Iger and when the Iger-Eisner shop was formed the following year, the twenty-one year old Kane was invited to join up. He did gag cartoons, under such titles as *Jest Laffs*, and a comedy/adventure strip called *Peter Pupp*. These ran in *Jumbo Comics*. In the Pupp feature, which looks to have been inspired in part by Floyd Gottfredson's *Mickey Mouse* newspaper strip, Kane first dealt with some of the elements he'd be handling more seriously in *Batman*. Pete was a daring little fellow and a typical four-page sequence had him going up in a fighter plane to combat a giant robot controlled by a satanic villain with one eye in the middle of his forehead.

Kane's first sales to DC were also humorous, one- and two-page comedy fillers. There were *Professor Doolittle*, a pantomime effort for *Adventure*, *Ginger Snap*, about a wise little girl, for *More Fun* and *Oscar the Gumshoe* for *Detective*.

In his entry in Jerry Bails' *Who's Who of American Comic Books* Kane lists the artists who had a major influence on him as Alex Raymond, Billy DeBeck



Art by Dick Sprang

Art by Jerry Robinson

and Milton Caniff. His first serious feature, *Rusty and his Pals*, shows the Caniff influence clearly. It commenced in *Adventure Comics* in 1938 and dealt with three boys, Rusty, Specs and Tubby, and their Pat Ryan-type mentor, Steve Carter. Like Caniff's Terry, Rusty and company tangled with pirates and sinister Orientals. Kane's drawing was cartoony on the early episodes, but he grew a bit more serious as *Rusty* progressed, even emulating Caniff's style of inking.

The scripts for his first adventurous venture were provided by Kane's Bronx neighbor Bill Finger. Two years older than Kane and working at selling shoes, Finger was a dedicated reader of the pulps and a movie fan. After the two met at a party, they decided to collaborate. Their next joint effort was *Batman* and then came *Clip Carson*, which began in *Action Comics 14* (July, 1939). "I've always liked Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*," Finger once explained. "So I thought we might have a great white hunter type—one whose adventures would take him anywhere, Africa, South America, anywhere." Finger never got credit on any of the Kane features and it wasn't until he helped create Green Lantern in 1940 that his name began to appear in comic books. Except for a spell of TV writing, Finger remained in comics for most of his life. He died in 1974.

The other early script writer on Batman was the prolific Gardner F. Fox. "I started with the second one, or soon after," Fox has said. He's certain the third Batman yarn, the one that pitted him against Dr. Death, is his. And for *Detective* 31 and 32 he wrote the twoparter dealing with the Monk. "I didn't stay on Batman that long. Bill Finger was an old friend of Bob Kane and wanted to write him, so they gave me other things to write." Among the other things Fox went on to write were Sandman, Dr. Fate, the Flash, Hawkman, the Justice Society of America adventures, Skyman, Starman and quite a few others. In his late twenties when he started writing for comic books, Fox had originally intended to devote his life to being a lawyer. But when his friend Vincent Sullivan, a DC editor, suggested he try a script, Fox "decided to give the comics a try."

Within less than a year Batman was established as the definite star of *Detective*. His monthly adventures had grown from six to twelve pages, he began appearing on each and every cover. Kane, quite probably in anticipation of even more expansion, gathered a team of boy wonders to assist him. The first was Jerry Robinson, seventeen and fresh out of school. "I'd met Bob the summer after I graduated from high school," he has said. "In those days, white painter's jackets were very popular with college kids, and students would paint all sorts of razzmatazz on their jackets. I decorated my own as I had been the cartoonist on my high school paper. I was wearing this jacket while waiting to play tennis at a resort when this fellow came up and asked who had drawn the cartoons. He turned out to be Bob Kane...and he offered me a job as his assistant if I was willing to come to New York City. It seemed a great way to pay my college expenses so I moved to New York and transferred to Columbia...I began lettering the strip and inking the background. After a while, I started to ink most of the

Art by Jack Burnley

BATMAN AND ROBIN
WE'VE GOT THE JUMP ON 'EM, ROBIN!
WHILE TOWNSPEOPLE FIGHT A RAGING FOREST FIRE, IMPERILING THEIR HOMES, THUGS ARE LOOTING THE DESERTED TOWN...WHEN BATMAN AND ROBIN SURPRISE THEM IN THE ACT....
YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN, ROBIN! KALLER TRYING TO MAKE A RUN FOR IT!
HOLD ON, MISTER... YOU'RE GOING PAST A RED LIGHT!
BLAST YOU, BATMAN!
A LITTLE IRONICAL, ISN'T IT, MISTER... THAT A MAN WHO PLAYED AROUND WITH FIRE SHOULD BE PUT OUT BY WATER!

figures as well, and pretty soon Bob would just pencil the strip and I would do the complete inking."

A natural artist, Robinson improved rapidly and was soon soloing on some Batman and Robin episodes. He also began to be influenced by other cartoonists, especially the gifted Mort Meskin. At one point Robinson shared a studio with Meskin and Bernie Klein, a promising young cartoonist who was killed in the service during World War II. Meskin, one of the best men to work in Golden Age comics, was an illustrator at heart and he could do things that were beyond the more cartoony comic book artists. His figure work was expert, his staging caused the action to flow from panel to panel. A modest, shy man, Meskin nonetheless had an important influence on the comics of the 1940s. His most successful disciple was Robinson, who eventually changed the entire look of the Batman stories. If you follow Robinson's stuff from 1939 into the early 1940s you can see continual change and improvement. This culminated in the covers and stories he did for *Batman* and *Detective Comics* in 1942 and 1943.

For *Daredevil* in 1941 Robinson did a war-oriented mystery man named London. This one he got to sign. By the middle 1940s he had left Batman and was drawing the Green Hornet for the Harvey Bros. After the war he teamed with Meskin and they produced some handsome work on the Fighting Yank, the Black Terror, Vigilante and Johnny Quick. In the early 1950s Robinson drew an attractive but not successful adventure strip titled Jet Scott. He thereafter switched to humor with newspaper features such as *Still Life* and *Flubs & Fluffs*.

George Roussos was nineteen when he went to work inking for Bob Kane in 1939. He branched out in the early 1940s, inking also for Bob Wood. This accounts for the many similarities between Wood's Target and the wartime Batman. On his own Roussos drew *Nightro* in *Daredevil* and *Air Wave* in *Detective*. He did some striking coloring on this latter feature, although he's claimed that was mostly to hide his bad inking. Another anonymous Batman inker was Charles Paris, who went to work for Kane in the middle 1940s and also inked much of the newspaper strip. Jack Burnley had been doing sports panels for King Features throughout the 1930s. He graduated to comic books, drawing Starman. DC editor Whit Ellsworth also put him to work ghosting stories for both Superman and Batman. Burnley, who had a meticulous and realistic style, did covers as well, for *Action*, *Adventure* and *World's Finest*. He pencilled the 1940s *Batman* Sunday page as well as a few of the daily continuities. When he left comic books in the late 1940s, he returned to newspaper sports cartooning.

Dick Sprang first drew Batman in 1943. A freelance pulp, comic and advertising artist since the Thirties, he worked directly for Whit Ellsworth and had no contact with Bob Kane. According to Sprang, he merely walked into DC, showed his work and was offered the job. For a sample he did "a one page *Terry and the Pirates* type story. I managed to drag about everything possible into one page." After looking at the page, Ellsworth had Sprang try three Batman audition pages. He liked those and Sprang began an association that was to continue for almost two decades. His first stories, and covers, were for the *Batman* bimonthly and from 1944 on he was providing most of the Batman stories for *Detective*, too.

As Batman continued to flourish sundry others—Otto Binder, Jack Shiff, Win Mortimer, Mort Weisinger, etc.—took a hand in his broadening career. But during the Golden Age those mentioned above were the chief contributors.

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